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1931

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# **LANDSCAPE IN POETRY**

**FROM HOMER TO TENNYSON**



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# LANDSCAPE IN POETRY

FROM

## HOMER TO TENNYSON

*WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES*

BY

### FRANCIS T. PALGRAVE

*LATE PROFESSOR OF POETRY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD*

Natura lo suo corso prende  
Dal Divino intelletto, e da Sua arte

*Dante*

Mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung  
als Malerei

*Beethoven, Motto for the  
Pastoral Symphony*

London

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## PREFACE

"AMONG the many movements" of the human mind during the nineteenth century not the least worthy of note has been the greatly wider prominence and popularity reached by landscape art, not only in the form of picture and drawing, but as diffused by multiplied forms of reproduction, and by photography. The manifold sources of interest and pleasure thus opened to civilised nations—to England in particular, long the favourite home of this art—are obvious. Nor, perhaps, would it be possible to name any other line of development and advance more innocent and wholesome, or more free from the counterpoising evils which, with a sad, an almost uniform frequency, lie in wait upon every step forward or onward that mankind can take.

Poetry and painting, if not brother and sister (as once was said of music and of song), are at least nearly akin; and this progress in landscape art seems to give a timeliness to the aim of the following book, enlarged from lectures delivered in the University of Oxford during 1895. And the sphere of University work has itself been recently widened in two directions which may also, it is hoped, render such an attempt more seasonable,—the Honour School of English Language and Literature, and the "Extension" system. It has been partly with reference to these that so many specimens of the treatment of Landscape in its widest sense are here offered; and that those from ancient or foreign literatures have been

translated into prose with the greatest degree of closeness to the originals which I have been able to provide or to find,—although conscious everywhere how largely poetical charm has been hence sacrificed. Yet thus only, as a rule, can any fair portion of the original tone and colour be preserved. Almost every verse translator is inevitably tempted to import modern, romantic, detail and feeling into classical poetry. And even where the aim has been at literal accuracy, the difference in sentiment with which the ancient and modern worlds have regarded Nature is so fine and subtle, that it proves apt to evaporate under metrical necessities. A few translations in verse, however, are included for the sake of relief when they seemed sufficiently close to retain some part of the authentic quality.

It is simply as Literature that the Greek and Roman poets, with those who follow, have been here regarded. Philological questions, with the influence of national History over Poetry, lie beyond my scope.

But so far as I may have succeeded in this effort it will meet the wish expressed by Matthew Arnold in one of his letters, that a somewhat considerable body of Greek and Latin literature should be so rendered as to make it accessible to readers, anxious for some familiarity with the literature of those great languages which they have studied but little.

The original texts have uniformly been subjoined (except in case of Hebrew, Celtic, and Anglo-Saxon quotations), in the hope that the book may thus gain an interest for a larger body of readers. Here the always increasing number of University Extension students, and of other readers everywhere, has been specially kept in view; those who, without directly aiming at scholarship, have knowledge enough of languages not our own as to be able, by aid of an English version, to trace something of the aspect, something of the original charm and magic by

---

which Homer, Vergil, or Dante, are enhaloed :—While scholars may be interested by this first attempt to unite in what might be strictly named an Anthology, a tolerably full gallery of exquisite pictures from worlds now passed away—

Cras amet qui nunquam amavit, quique amavit cras amet.

To those readers, again, who are preparing for the English Honour School, I would point out :—First, that knowledge of the great classical literature, of the poets in particular, is simply essential to the true, the innermost appreciation of our own poetry ; and then, that the series of this collection which ranges from Hellas to Saxon England, in its degree displays the sources, more or less foreign, which have played a part so large and so beneficial in forming that literature, which, in Macaulay's noble phrase, is “the most splendid and the “most durable of the many glories of England.”

The plan of the volume is explained in the prefatory chapter. Here, on my own account, I will only add a few words from the excellent *Household Book of English Poetry*, by Archbishop Trench : “I trust that I shall not be found fault with that I “have sometimes taken upon me in these notes to indicate what “seemed worthy of special admiration, or sought in other ways “to plant the reader at that point of view from which the merits “of some poem might be most deeply felt and best understood.”

If the explanatory criticisms now offered should sometimes have the good fortune even to approach the quality of those supplied by the good and gifted Archbishop, my readers may be amply satisfied.

LONDON, September 1896



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*Omissions in the poems quoted are marked by small groups of full stops; a line of which indicates that the part omitted is of some length.*

## CHAPTER I

### *PREFATORY*

FROM primaevial days it is impossible that man can have looked without interest, awe, and pleasure on the mysteriously alluring scene around him—mountains, rivers, plains, sea, sky : stars, moon, sun, their rising and setting. Nor could these great features of nature fail of being in some way represented, so soon as poetry and painting reached any true grasp of expression. Those so remote efforts, however, whatever they may have been, are lost ; and centuries probably went by before Palestine and Hellas gave us the earliest extant delightful examples of Landscape in Words. But the case was different with Landscape in Colours, in which scarce any relic has survived for some two thousand years after the probable date of the poems that have reached us under the awe-striking names of David and of Homer.

The first interest, then, which may be claimed for our subject is that, in its limited degree, poetry does enable us to feel how the book of Nature, with its many-coloured pages, affected the three gifted literary races of the Mediterranean world—Hebrew, Hellenic, Latin—during years when, if landscape art in some sense may have existed, the evidence of it has barely survived in a few crumbling Graeco-Roman frescoes. Literature (in which we must here include prose) has hence singly Landscape for her portion, broadly speaking, between 1000 B.C. and 1000 A.D. After that date, more or less, first as a

background to human figures, then in Titian's work to Turner's,<sup>1</sup> Landscape appears as, itself and by itself, an unfailing source of pure, lasting pleasure.

To trace landscape in colour through its parallel course to landscape in words would be a most interesting essay. This cannot be here attempted ; but it may help to clear up our main subject if we cast a prefatory glance at the characteristics of the two arts ; so far as words can render the silent inner effect which picture or poem, in proportion to their merit in art, leave on the sensitive spectator. In common, both, it is almost a truism to say, are bound to exhibit Nature as seen through, coloured, penetrated by the poet's or the painter's soul ; whilst they, in turn, if genuinely gifted for art, frame their ideal landscape on the great lines, and after the laws and inner intention of Nature herself : reverting thus to realism in its real essence through the union of observation and individual genius. In varying degrees Nature must thus be generalised or modified ; bare realistic photography, or a mere catalogue of details,—each fails to give the landscape, rendered in words or colours, that union with human feeling which, whether by way of sympathy or of contrast, art itself and the human soul always imperatively call for. The absence of this marriage of Man and Nature is what leaves us cold, we hardly know why, before many a skilful landscape picture, and is what tempts us to skip the poet's descriptive passages.—Thus far for what is common between the rival arts ; we may now compare them. Poetry, rendering the scene or subject chosen in successive verbal pictures, and bringing before us images of scent and sound and movement, has at first sight vast advantages over painting, confined, as the artist is, in regard to form, to a single instant, and unable to do more than barely suggest motion ; whilst his colours, with the light and shade, available as materials, cannot go beyond one octave, as it were, in the long scale

<sup>1</sup> I allude to the magnificent specimen, said to be a view from Friuli, in the Buckingham Palace collection. This, the faded frescoes in the *Scuola del Santo*, Padua, and the backgrounds to some of his figure-pictures, show a depth and truth of sentiment not always found in Titian's subject-inventions, and suggest that had the due season arrived, he might have ranked easily among the very greatest of the landscapists.

of Nature, ranging from absolute darkness to midday splendour. Add to this that the poet can prepare the reader's mind for his landscape, connecting it easily with the always underlying human sentiment, whilst the painter must produce his effect almost wholly<sup>1</sup> by the canvas presented. Yet, on the other hand, who can question that colours, even a single colour, shall place the scene before eye and mind with a vivid truth, a realisation, which the genius of the Muse herself, concentrating all the skill of all the poets who have ever been, cannot even approach? — And it adds to the interest of this comparison, that among the different races of mankind it will often be found that one has been gifted most for the pen, another for the palette.

The task before us is sufficiently large, and it will be best to sketch its limitations at once. My scheme does not aim to cover the whole field even of Western poetry. Both in extent and in the varied command of language requisite for such an anthology, it would be beyond my powers; and far more, such a world-wide gathering as that which the distinguished German Herder attempted in his *Popular Songs*.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in the first portion of my work, I can only allude to the singular development of Landscape in Poetry displayed, according to Humboldt, long before the Christian era, in the Indian *Vedas*, in the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and with greater fullness in the poems of Kalidasa, contemporaneous with Vergil and Horace. Amongst Kalidasa's, Humboldt especially praises the landscapes in the *Megadhuta* or *Cloud Messenger*, so named from the drifting vapour to which the lover confides his grief. We find here a meditative dreamlike sentiment, a sympathetic nearness to Nature, which, in contrast with the Greek apartness from her, the Greek definiteness of outline, may be truly called romantic. The poem "paints with admirable truth to nature, the joyful welcome which . . . hails the "first appearance of the rising cloud, showing that the looked-

<sup>1</sup> Almost wholly, because a landscape known to the spectator, or one obviously dealing with some familiar human incident or passage in literature (like the names affixed to "programme" music), may more or less dispose the spectator to grasp the painter's idea.

<sup>2</sup> *Volks Lieder*, 1778.

"for season of rains is at hand."<sup>1</sup> But this rich vein of song, with whatever treasures are lying hid from us, like gold within the rock, in all that Persia, Arabia, China, may also preserve, must be here passed by ; in Pindar's phrase, they "speak 'only to the wise.'" And we shall afterwards have to notice other inevitable omissions.

The subject, even when limited, has thus far, I believe, been but briefly handled ; I might almost repeat with that deep-souled and prophetic bard who did most for Roman nature-scenes, "the pathless places of poetry are our wandering ground," *Avia Pieridum peragro loca*. But it is in no spirit of boasting that this is noted ; the fact is rather a source of anxiety, an appeal to the reader for a judgment, lenient if not favourable, of an attempt which cannot escape frequent deficiencies.

Although Landscape in Poetry has not hitherto, so far as my knowledge goes, at least in our language, been so much as mapped out systematically, yet I have been greatly aided by certain previous essays. Most important of these is the sketch (which does not exclude landscapes in prose or in colour) by that many-sided man of science, Alexander von Humboldt, in *Cosmos*, his great *Physical Description of the Universe*. Another and a more detailed survey is given in the volume of lectures by my gifted predecessor at Oxford, J. C. Shairp :<sup>2</sup> but it is chiefly our own poets who here are analysed ; the series, perhaps rather arbitrarily selected, ending with Wordsworth. Briefer, but with more variety in range, is an outline prefixed to Mr. J. Gilbert's excellent and carefully illustrated volume, *Landscape in Art before Claude and Salvator*.<sup>3</sup> And a very few but well chosen poets have been similarly treated in Mr. P. G. Hamerton's *Landscape*.<sup>4</sup> In case of Greek and Roman literature I am

<sup>1</sup> *Cosmos*, Part II : The authorised translation, edited by E. Sabine, 1849, has here been used.

<sup>2</sup> *The Poetic Interpretation of Nature*. Edinburgh, 1877.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, 1885. This very interesting work shows wide study and refined taste. By aid of illuminations and the backgrounds in early painting it traces landscape from classical art onwards, thus covering ground untouched by any other book I have met with. It deserves to be better known.

<sup>4</sup> 1885.

also indebted much to the work of two friends, W. Y. Sellar's admirable monographs on Lucretius and Vergil,<sup>1</sup> J. W. Mackail's select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology,<sup>2</sup> and his brilliant *Latin Literature*.<sup>3</sup> Other sources of aid will be named as they occur. And there will be more such than I can notice or remember.

It is hardly needful to say that Nature, as here spoken of, falls short of the large sense in which Marcus Aurelius used the word:—"O Nature, from thee are all things, in thee are "all things, to thee all things return;" nor do we speak of that personification in J. S. Mills' phrase as "a collective "name for everything that is," or as including "not only "all that happens, but all that is capable of happening." Compared with Nature in her infinite vastness, her infinite minuteness, our sphere is indeed limited. It is the surface of this little world<sup>4</sup>—or, indeed only a small part of that surface—with sky and its earthborn features, and beyond, the heavenly bodies, as the fine old phrase names them, with which we are concerned; yet the aspects of Nature to man as he sees and loves and strives to render them in poetry, from the beginning we shall find have constantly either expressed or implied the sense of Divine causation or presence; and with this, that mysterious sense that we also are in some way one with what we see; that silent voices are speaking to us from land and sky, even that whatever we find of real existence, of the hyperphenomenal (if I may use the word) in ourselves, is immanent throughout the *Cosmos*. Or (to quote from an eminently thoughtful writer<sup>5</sup>) man's personifications of natural

<sup>1</sup> Published by the Clarendon Press.

<sup>2</sup> With translation and notes. Longmans, 1890.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, 1895. These four last-named volumes, uniting scholarly thoroughness of treatment with fine taste and enthusiastic love of poetry, have a charm and a value comparatively unfrequent in literature of this class. They exhibit classical study less as a means than as an end, opening to us the innermost spirit of poetry, the secret chambers of the heart, by the master-key of sound scholarship—*Literae Humaniores*, in the highest sense of the words.

<sup>4</sup> Compare Dante, looking back from the Starry Heaven—

Vidi questo globo

Tal, ch' io sorrisi del suo vil sembiante.

Par. xxii, 134.

<sup>5</sup> Duke of Argyll, *The Philosophy of Belief*, 1896.

scenery, we may say, are “not the result of any mere ignorant fancy by which we project ourselves into external Nature, but evidently the result of an instinctive recognition of that special kind of agency which is, indeed, familiarly known to us as existing within ourselves, but which is also universally recognised and identified as existing outside of us and around us, on every side. It is a reflection of that infinite Reason, that *Logos*—of which we partake, and without which in Nature was not anything made that was made. All things, including ourselves, are full of it.”

It is not meant that these larger thoughts have been always—perhaps have been often—within the direct consciousness of poets in their landscape. Yet the sense (to sum up this argument) of the purpose infused through “everything that is,” from the adjustment of sun and planets to the smallest function microscopically traceable in plant and animal structure—in one word, the sense of the unity of Nature, rendered in terms appropriate to each age as it passes; these have been deep underlying principles, a secret inspiration from the first, in the unsophisticated human mind and heart, and should always be kept in view through our survey from Homer to Tennyson.

Hence in many different modes it is that landscape appears in poetry; the soul of Nature has spoken to man with all her vast—in the epithet which Shelley took from Lucretius, her “daedal”—fullness. Some of these modes it will be best to define briefly. The task is indeed difficult; indulgence is besought for it, as a mere sketch-map for the wide regions we have to traverse.

Four or five main aspects of Nature taken by man’s mind in poetry may suffice. These can be ranged broadly from simple to complex, forming a development which, at the same time, answers more or less to the order of date. But it should always be remembered that art is free, that the poets especially do not always confine themselves to a single mode of treatment; that human nature itself remains, as Thucydides long since said, much the same throughout. The new is latent in the old, the old breathes forth through the new. Hence the various aspects of landscape in which Nature

offers herself never wholly disappear from poetry ; they revive, or they melt into one another, defeating the effort to range them under definite classes or in sharply separated periods.

I We may first name the simple, almost physical, delight in the scenes of the home landscape, which seized especially on the early poets of Greece and the Middle Ages. Objects were painted singly and with a few clear touches ; the meadow in spring, the living stream, the cool sheltering wood, the flower at their feet, as we always see with children, appear to limit their horizon. Poetry in this phase, in truth, but sets to song the cry of delight when infant eyes open on the cowslip field ; and early as the style began, it repeats itself ever and anon, in Wordsworth's phrase, "Where life is wise and innocent."

II Even, however, in the earliest days of surviving poetry, from Homer himself, landscape, taking also a wider range, appears as the background to human life—as scenery to the play. It is thus by snatches and side glimpses that Nature, as a rule, is seen in the poetry of Greece, epic or lyric. Here we find a close analogy between painting and poetry, and this primitive mode in verse has been truly likened to the exquisitely imaginative fragments of landscape which delight us in the figure-subjects of the old Italian and Flemish artists, before landscape as such was dealt with as by itself sufficient. ||

III In classical poetry, however, the range gradually widens. Civilisation and the life in cities threw then, as they throw now, the sensitive soul upon the pure charm of Nature, whilst Nature, through roads and resting-places, became everywhere more accessible. Philosophy—conscious thought upon thought—compels man to ask the origin and the meaning of the visible world. Nature, as the immediate work, and in some sense the expression of the Divine, is rendered by Hebrew poetry ; as a vast vague power appears distinctly with Lucretius. Deep interest in the landscape, a certain passion for it as such, sympathy with Nature, make themselves heard in Roman song ; landscape now at once contrasts with, and supports humanity.

IV Presently the Hebrew and the Roman sentiment are united and expanded by Christianity so vastly that poetry hence-

forth prepares to be penetrated by what one may call the modern spirit. And the popular recognition of this change, this development, is well founded, despite the attempts which began with the Italian Renaissance to renew the classical spirit. Neo-paganism is a hollow theatrical mask ; the old world, broadly speaking, does differ widely from the modern. Greek, Latin, Hebrew poetry alike think of Nature as subordinate in interest, or as external to man. But the long interval of European dislocation and reconstruction now intervenes ; more than six centuries, during which light struggles with darkness and barbarism, must be overleapt before the modern world—the mediaeval-modern perhaps one might name it—was born ; before Poetry lifted her voice to charm and to comfort mankind again.

The horizon henceforth was immensely enlarged ; at first seen only from the valley just as it lies about us, the landscape is now studied, as it were, from the mountain top. Religion, Man, Nature, these permanent elements of the landscape in poetry, wrought upon by mediaeval thought, by the Renaissance, by our own modern atmosphere, so largely tinged by physical science, have given rise to certain deeper, more intimate, relations between Nature and the soul. "Mellower years," in Wordsworth's phrase, "brought a riper mind, And clearer insight." Landscape now appears as matter of pure description, human interests being subordinate, like the figures introduced in the work of painters from Claude to our own time. With this also, in a kind of contrast, poetry devoted to regions or spots of historical interest may be named. This latter form, however, leads naturally to didactic treatment ; and the danger of hence declining into prosaic style has rendered it comparatively infrequent.

More distinctly modern is the attempt to penetrate the inner soul of the landscape itself ; drawing from it moral lessons or parables for encouragement, or, indeed, for warning, when before the poet's mind is the unsympathetic aspect of Nature, her merciless indifference to human life. Under another conception the landscape becomes a symbol of underlying spiritual truths. Or again, it is, as it were, clothed in

the hues of human passion, idealised by strong emotion—a mood which easily falls into exaggerated figures, or what Mr. Ruskin may imply by “the pathetic fallacy.”

Here we may also note how, at least in the English work of this century, a remarkable element pervades the landscape of the poets. Whether in regard to distances or to nearer objects, a greater truth, a finer and closer accuracy is constantly given. In this, the latest of our styles, we may trace the influence of facts made known by science; the geological elements which have shaped the mountain; the intimate structure of the flower; or, more important, the lessons of thorough methodical investigation which physical science has impressed, not only on poetry, but upon every branch of human study.

We may perhaps now suggest the deepest point of view in our poetical treatment of the landscape, nay, the very basis of the deepest accents of song, in the phrase used by a writer to whom I have already been indebted: “the recognition of “mind by mind”;<sup>1</sup> of the unity between the wonders of the world without with the wonders of the world within; the perception of Divine purpose; the organic “pre-established “harmony” (to take the old formula) between our sensations of charm and the scene before us; the beauty of the world, which in itself—as another deeply feeling writer<sup>2</sup> has observed—Nature, as it were, does not need for use, or to gain her own aims, coming forward, almost as a living personality—the *Alma Venus* of Lucretius—to meet and vitalise the sense of beauty implanted in man. These phrases, indeed, only attempt imperfectly to set forth what we can rather feel than express, but what, indeed, it is the privilege of Poetry herself, in her highest moods, to awaken in the sympathetic soul. Yet, like all that belongs to the spiritual side of human nature, these thoughts come only by glimpses—seen, and hardly seen;—like fairy treasures they vanish when touched by the “dead hand” of definition.

A noble passage from S. Augustine’s *Confessions*<sup>3</sup> may sum up this subject in better words than mine. Nature, he argues, leads him up to God by her beauty—

<sup>1</sup> Duke of Argyll, *The Unity of Nature* (1888).

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Mozley, *University Sermons*.

<sup>3</sup> B. x, vi.

“ *What is this?* I asked the earth, and it answered me, *I am not He*; and all that is therein confessed the same. I “ asked the sea and the depths, and the creeping things with “ life, and they answered, *We are not thy God, seek thou above “ us.* I asked the breezy gales, and the airy universe, and all “ its denizens replied, *Anaximenes is mistaken, I am not God.* “ I asked heaven, sun, moon, stars : *Neither are we*, say they, “ *the God whom thou seekest.* And I said unto all things “ which stand about the gateways of my flesh (*i.e.* are acces-“ sible to the senses), *Ye have told me of my God, that ye are “ not He; tell me something of Him.* And they cried out with “ a loud voice, *He made us.*”

## CHAPTER II

### *LANDSCAPE IN THE GREEK EPIC*

THESE many moods in which poets have tried to translate Nature must obviously bring with them a great and delightful variety in treatment. Throughout, however, the governing rule, which, consciously or not, has been almost always followed, may be expressed in the noteworthy phrase used by Beethoven as the motto of his great *Pastoral Symphony*, “Mehr Ausdruck ‘der Empfindung als Malerei’”: It is not so much painting, as the rendering of inner sentiment. With this as a kind of text, to be before the mind always, let us approach our only too vast theme, following within the domain of each language a rough chronological order, and beginning with the Greek and the Roman poets—those who, after all and above all, in the region of their art,

Are yet a master light of all our seeing—

guides and models now for near two thousand years, unsurpassed, and seldom equalled.

Epic poetry properly deals with the acts and passions of man. Hence in the verse of that still greatest of all poets, Homer, or whoever left us *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, natural description as such is always purely incidental to the narrative, introduced most often in the form of comparison. But Homer's vast range of simile thus brings in wild beasts and birds, beside the landscape, scattered everywhere in profusion; and he has painted all with a picturesque vigour, as famous

now as in its own ancient day for its life and truth. Let us take some of these glimpses at random. When Odysseus, yet unknown, relates some tale of adventure to Penelopé—

As the snow which the south-east wind has melted, when softened by Zephyr, thaws on the mountain-heights, and as it melts, the rivers fill while they flow<sup>1</sup>—even thus flowed her tears.

Or, when Circe had undone the spell wherewith she bound the companions of Odysseus, and he returns to them, we have this farmyard picture—how lively, how fresh, how modern!<sup>2</sup>

As when young heifers in the fold-yard all frisk together about the drove of cows when they return home satiated with pasture; nor any longer do the pens restrain them, but with vehement lowing they run round the mothers; so they . . .

Homer was not only familiar with the sea, but loved it with a love somewhat unusual in poets. Hence the comparison following, when Diomedē encourages the Achaeans to battle.

But as when on a loud-resounding beach, as Zephyr moves them, wave on wave of ocean rushes—cresting itself first out at sea, but next as it breaks on the land roaring loudly; and curves round the headlands as it goes, in a peak, and spews forth the sea-foam; so the Danaan ranks . . .<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ὡς δὲ χιῶν κατατήκετ' ἐν ἀκροπόλοισιν βρεσσοιν,  
ἥν τ' Εὔρος κατέηχεν, ἐτὴν Ζέφυρος καταχεύην.  
τηκομένης δ' ἀρα τῆς ποταμοὶ πλήθουσι φέοντες.

Od. xix, 205.

<sup>2</sup> ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἀν δύραυλοι πέρι βοῦς ἀγελαλας,  
ἔλθοντας ἐς κότρον, ἐπὴν βοτάνης κορέσωνται,  
πᾶσαι ἄμα σκάρουσιν ἔναντιαι· οὐδ' ἔτι σηκοὶ<sup>4</sup>  
ἰσχονούσι, ἀλλ' ἀδινὸν μυκώμεναι ἀμφιθέουσιν  
μητέρας· ὡς ἐμὲ κείνοι . . .

Od. xi, 40.

<sup>3</sup> ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἐν αἰγαλῷ πολυηχεῖ κῦμα θαλάσσης  
ὄρντι ἐπαστύτερον Ζεφύρου ὑπὸ κινήσαντος·  
πόντῳ μὲν τε πρῶτα κορύσσεται, αὐτὰρ ἐπειτα  
χέρσῳ ῥηγνύμενον μεγάλα βρέμει, ἀμφὶ δέ τ' ἀκρας  
κυρτὸν λὸν κορυφοῦται, ἀποπτύει δ' ἀλὸς ἀχνην·  
ὡς τότ' . . .

Il. iv, 422.

Needs not here point out the perfect truth of the painting. Everywhere, indeed, Homer's astonishingly close observation of Nature allows him to give almost tangible reality by the slightest touches to imaginary scenes ; as when, before Odysseus lands on Phaeacia, Nausicaa, wellnigh the sweetest girl whom poetry has painted, with her maids, is spreading the household linen on the beach—

Even where the sea, in beating on the coast, *washed the pebbles clear.*<sup>1</sup>

Two more of the great poet's inimitable flashes which in five words set before the eye other sea-aspects may follow. A whole landscape in itself seems to be painted in the two simple lines which speak of the distance between Achilles and his own country—

—Many things lie between us, the shadowy mountains and the resounding sea ;<sup>2</sup>

the great ocean *darkening*, as he elsewhere says, with a noiseless, foamless swell before it breaks.<sup>3</sup>

Turning now to such longer landscape as the epic occasionally allows, let Tennyson's accurate art give us the famous night-scene by the Trojan camp ; the fires are blazing around—

As when in heaven the stars about the moon  
Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,  
And every height comes out, and jutting peak  
And valley, and the immeasurable heavens

<sup>1</sup> ήχι μάλιστα  
λάγγας ποτὶ χέρσον ἀποπλύεσκε θάλασσα.

*Od. vi, 94.*

<sup>2</sup> . . . μάλα πολλὰ μεταξύ,  
οὐρέα τε σκιεντα θάλασσά τε ἡχησσα.

*Il. i, 156.*

<sup>3</sup> ὡς ὅτε πορφύρη πέλαγος μέγα κύματι κωφῶ.

*Il. xiv, 16.*

Break open to their highest, and all the stars  
Shine, and the Shepherd gladdens in his heart.<sup>1</sup>

These lines are from the *Iliad*, which is also richer than the companion poem in glimpses of the animal world in its fierceness. To the calmer, more homely atmosphere of the *Odyssey* belongs naturally the landscape of cultivated spots — flower and fruit, and cool streams, and simple sensuous happiness. Such are the gardens of King Alcinous<sup>2</sup>—

Without the hall, near the gates, was a vast four-square garden, and a hedge ran round it from both ends. There great trees flourished, pears and pomegranates and apples of gorgeous fruit, and sweet figs and vigorous olives. Never dies or fails their fruitage, winter or summer, the year long ; but ever and ever Zephyr breathing brings some to bud, some to ripeness. Pear grows old on pear, apple on apple, grapes on grapes, fig on fig. . . . There also are two fountains, one spreading through the whole garth, whilst the other passes toward the lofty palace.

This domestic scene, which also seems to answer to the character of Alcinous himself and his delightful family, contrasts curiously with the great natural landscape which we have seen

<sup>1</sup> ὡς δέ οὐρανῷ δοστρα φαευθῆ μαμφί σελήνη  
φαίνεται δραπετέα, όπε τ' ἐγλετο νήνεμος αἰθήρ,  
ἐκ τ' ἔφαει τάσαι σκοτιαὶ καὶ πρώσεις δέροι  
καὶ πάται οὐρανόθεν δέ δρ' ὑπερράγη δοσκετος αἰθήρ,  
πάντα δὲ εἴδεται δοστρα γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα τοιμήτη.

Il. viii, 555.

<sup>2</sup> ἐκτοσθει δέ αὐλῆς μέγας δρχατος ἄγχι θύρων  
τετράγυνος περὶ δέ ἔρκος ἐλήναται ἀμφοτέρωθεν.  
Ἐνθα δὲ δένδρα μακρὰ τεφύκαστ τηλεθώντα,  
ὄγχραι καὶ ροαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαβέκαρποι  
συκέαι τε γλυκεραι καὶ ἔλαιαι τηλεθώνται.  
τάων οὐ τοτε καρπὸς ἀπόλινται οὐδὲ ἀπολείται  
χείματος οὐδὲ θέρευς, ἐπετήσιος δὲλλα μάλ' αἰεὶ<sup>3</sup>  
Ζεφυρίη πνέουσα τὰ μὲν φύε, μᾶλλα δὲ πέσσει.  
ὄγχρη ἐπ' ὄγχρη γηράσκει, μῆλος δέ ἐπὶ μῆλῳ,  
αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ σταφυλῇ σταφυλῇ, σύκως δέ ἐπὶ σύκῳ.

ἐν δὲ δύο κρήταις η μέν τ' ἀνὰ κῆπος διατάτα  
εκίδναται, η δέ ἐτέρωθεν ὑπ' αὐλῆς οὐδὲν έργοι  
τρός δόμους ὑψηλόν . . .

Od. vii, 112.

was needed to complete the picture of the camp. But Homer, as the Greeks said, was equal to everything. In the *Odyssey*, again, we have the magnificent boar-hunt of the youthful Odysseus,<sup>1</sup> which in vigour and movement of life and clear definition anticipates Scott's similar scene in the *Bride*; whilst, as an example of the idyllic vein which runs through the poem, we may take the picture of the land of the Cyclopes—

Where are meadows by the sea-downs, watery soft; and  
the vines never wither, and level there must the ploughland be.<sup>2</sup>

After the lapse of three thousand years these small landscapes seem as if they might have been written to-day. It is the same with the characters—if we consider them apart from the external circumstances—in the two epics. Homer is the most unaffected of all poets; and hence, more than any other, I know not whether even Shakespeare should be excepted, he has, in Wordsworth's useful saying, “his eye on his object.” Hence also this modernness, this truth for all time.

The (so-called) Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite* has a curious passage, which with unusual fullness sets before us the mythology of the forest. The strange human sympathy shown here for nymph and tree, bound together in one life, has, or seems to have, a romantic, an almost Celtic, touch of sentiment.

Together with the birth of [the mountain Nymphs] are born pine trees or tall oaks from the nourishing earth, fair, flourishing on the lofty mountains of the Immortals: and these, mortals never cut with iron. But when the fated death has reached them, first those fair trees dry up on the ground, and the bark perishes round them, and the sprays fall, and the soul [of the Nymph] at the same moment quits the sunlight.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Od.* xix, 428.

<sup>2</sup> ἐν μὲν γὰρ λειμῶνες ἀλλὸς πολιοῦ παρ' θύθας  
ὑδρηλοὶ μαλακοὶ μάλα κ' ἀφθιτοὶ ἀμπελοὶ εἰσιν.  
Ἐν δ' ἀρροστὶ λεῖη. . . .

*Od.* ix, 132.

<sup>3</sup> τῆσι δ' ἄμ' ἡ ἐλάται τὴ δρῦς ὑψικάρηνος  
γενομένησαν ἔφυσαν ἐπὶ χθονὶ βωτιανείρῃ,

Another hymn shows us Pan in his wild career ; perhaps nowhere else in Hellenic poetry are the aspects of hill-country so freely painted. The Nymphs are following the god with dance and shout—

And he goes hither and thither through the thick bushes, now allured by the soft-flowing streams, now moving among the rocky steeps, as he climbs to the very highest summit to watch the flocks. Often he courses over the vast shining mountains . . . and, again leaving the chase, he will drive the sheep into the cavern, pouring forth from his reeds a sweet melody ; nor in songs could he be surpassed by that bird who, among the leaves of many-flowering spring, laments as she hurries out her sad sweet music. [And then Pan and the Nymphs are soon] in a soft meadow, where crocus and hyacinth, odorous and flourishing, are mixed everywhere with the grass. And they sing the blessed gods and great Olympus. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Hesiod's rude prosaic style and matter are not congenial to the poetic landscape. Yet with what grace are natural

*καλαί, τηλεθάνουσαι, ἐν οὐρεσιν ὑψηλοῖσιν  
ἀθανάτων τὰς δ' οὐτὶ βροτοὶ κείρουσι σιδήρῳ.  
ἀλλ' θε τε κεν δὴ μοῖρα παρεστήκη θανάτοιο,  
ἀξένται μὲν πτωτον ἐπὶ χθονὶ δένδρεα καλά.  
φλοίδες δ' ἀμφιπεριφυνόθει, πίπτονται δ' ἀπ' ὅξοι,  
τῶν δὲ χ' ὁμοῦ γυνχῆ λείκει φάσ ηελίοιο.*

*Ad Ven. 264.*

<sup>1</sup> *φοιτᾶ δ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα διὰ ρωπήια πυκνά,  
ἄλλοτε μὲν ρέθροισιν ἐφελκύμενος μαλακοῖσιν,  
ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ πέτρησιν ἐν ἡλιβάτοισι διουχνεῖ,  
ἀκροτάτην κορυφὴν μηλόσκοπον εἰσαναβάλνων.  
πολλάκι δ' ἀργυρωδεντα διέδραμεν οὐρεα μακρά, . . .  
. . . τότε δ' ἐς σπέσιν ήλασεν οἵας  
ἄγρης ἔξανιών, δονάκων ὅπο μούσταν ἀθύρων  
υῆδυμον· οὐκ διν τὸν γε παραδράμοι ἐν μελέεσσιν  
δρυις, ητ' ἔπειτα πολυανθέος ἐν πετάλαισι  
θρῆνον ἐπιπροχέοντος ἀχέει, μελίγηρυν δοιδήν.*

*ἐν μαλακῷ λειμῶνι, τόθι κρόκος ἡδ' ὑάκινθος  
εὐώδης θαλέθων καταμίσγεται ἄκριτα ποιην.  
νύμφενσιν δὲ θεούς μάκαρας καὶ μακρὸν Ολυμπον. . . .*

*Ad Panem 8 (Matthiae).*

How the buoyant hexameters here put the leaping shepherd-god before our eyes ! It is assuredly the voice of no small poet which breathes through this lovely hymn.

features veiled or personified, as Humboldt points out,<sup>1</sup> under mythical names, when he enumerates the Nereid sea-nymphs<sup>2</sup>—Kymodoké and Kymatolegé—goddess-spirits of the bays which receive and calm the restless waves; Ferousa, she that carries the ship; Actaea, the nymph of the shore; Eulimené, she of the fair haven. In this way the whole sea aspect seems set before us in distinct images. And by such images it should be always remembered that the sense of the Divine in Nature expressed itself to the Hellenic mind.

In this early time, or earlier, may also probably be placed those unhappily lost songs lamenting Linus or Daphnis or Adonis, with which the country folk deplored the fading of spring foliage and beauty under the southern sun heat; if, indeed, this was their only primitive meaning.

<sup>1</sup> *Cosmos*, vol. ii, ch. i.

<sup>2</sup> *Theogony*, 233.

## CHAPTER III

### *LANDSCAPE IN GREEK LYRICAL, IDYLLIC, AND EPIGRAMMATIC POETRY*

LYRICAL poetry, whether in its first natural use as the expression of personal feeling, or in the solemn, national, and religious ode, has offered small space for landscape until modern days. Yet that "Tenth Muse, Sappho fair" (Fl. c. 500 B.C.), as Plato named her, shows her exquisite Aeolian art and tenderness, "very woman" in everything, in certain little descriptive fragments, "more golden than gold," surviving still amongst the lamentable wreck of that consummate genius. Such is the garden vignette, where the rivulet murmurs cold among the apple-tree boughs, and sleep streams down on the trembling leaves.<sup>1</sup> Or take another, unsurpassable in its utter simplicity: *Set are moon and Pleiades, and it is midnight, and the hour is already passing, but I sleep alone.*<sup>2</sup> Last, the lovely bridal song, which I once tried to render thus—

{  
<sup>1</sup> διμφὶ δὲ ψῦχρον κελάδει δι' θσδων  
μαλίνων, αιθυσσομένων δὲ φύλλων  
κῶμα κατάρρει.

I have sometimes thought that we might render the words, "the rivulet murmurs through troughs of apple-tree branches." But the text here is sadly uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> δέδυκε μὲν ἀ σελάννα  
καὶ Πλητάδες, μέσαι δὲ  
νύκτες, παρὰ δὲ ἔρχετ' ὥρα,  
ἔγω δὲ μόνα κατεύδω.

O fair—O sweet !<sup>1</sup>  
 As the sweet apple blooms high on the bough,  
 High on the highest, forgot of the gatherers :  
 So Thou :—  
 Yet not so : nor forgot of the gatherers ;  
 High o'er their reach in the golden air,  
 O sweet—O fair !

A more complete night scene remains for us, written about a century earlier by Alkman of Sardis (Fl. 670 B.C.)—

Sleep mountain-tops and ravines,  
 Sleep headland and torrent ;  
 Sleep what dark earth bears on her bosom,  
 Green leaves and insects ;  
 Beasts in the den and bees in their families ;  
 Monsters in depths of the violet sea :  
 Sleeps every bird,  
 Folding the long wings to slumber.<sup>2</sup>

Upon this we might perhaps justly remark that the *personal* note of Sappho is absent. And a fragment may be added, partly because the last words call to mind Tennyson's "Sea—" blue bird of March," which he noticed in north-east Lincolnshire then coming up inland—

Would O would I were the kingfisher, as he flies with his mates in his feeble age between wind and water, the sea-bright bird of spring.<sup>3</sup>

Ὥ κάλα ὡ χαρέσσα.

οἷον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἐρείθεται ἀκρῷ ἐπ' ὑσδώ,  
 ἀκρον ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδροπῆς,  
 οὐ μὰν ἐκλελάθοντ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐδύναντ' ἐπίκεσθαι.

<sup>2</sup> εὑδονοιν δ' ὁρέων κορυφαὶ τε καὶ φάραγγες,  
 πρώνετε καὶ χαράδραι,  
 φύλλα τε ἐρπετά δ' δσσα τρέφει μέλαινα γᾶα,  
 θήρες δρεσκόντε καὶ γένος μελισσῶν  
 καὶ κνώδαλ' ἐν βένθεσσοι πορφυρέης ἀλός.  
 εὑδονοιν δ' οἰωνῶν φύλα τανυπτερύγων.

<sup>3</sup> . . . βάλε δὴ βάλε, κηρύλος εἶην,  
 δις τ' ἐπὶ κύματος ἀνθός ἄμ' ἀλκυνεσσοι ποτῆραι  
 νηλεγές θηροῦ ἔχων, ἀλιπόρφυρος εἴαρος ὄρνις.

G. S. Farnell, in his interesting *Greek Lyric Poetry* (1891), in a note on

The belief was that the female birds carried the male on their wings, as the poet here longs that the maidens would favour him in their dances.

Pindar the Dorian (522-442 B.C.) in a few lines paints what might be called a supernatural landscape, describing the souls in Elysium—

For them shines the sun in power all our night long, and the red rose meadows about their city are heavy with the shadowy incense-tree and golden fruits, . . . and happiness about them puts forth all her blossoms.<sup>1</sup>

Not less characteristic of Pindar's sharply touched descriptive power—and of his deep religious feeling, with varied tints colouring the pictures of Nature—is the mountain landscape which he gives in his first Pythian ode, speaking of

Aetna, the snowy pillar of heaven, that nurses the sharp, cold, never-melting snow; from whose depths are vomited forth the pure sulphur fountains of unapproachable fire; whilst by day those rivers pour forth a stream of dark-glowing smoke, but during the dark hours the ruddy blaze, rolling, carries crashing rocks to the deep-lying ocean plain.<sup>2</sup>

*κύματος ἄνθος*, literally "the flower of the wave," quotes (from Buchholz) the French phrase *à fleur d'eau*, which my paraphrase has tried to render.

<sup>1</sup> τοσοὶ λάμπει μὲν μένος ἀελίου τὰν ἐνθάδε νύκτα κάτω,  
φοινικορόδοις δ' ἐνι λειμῶνεσσι προάστιον αὐτῶν  
καλ λαβάνψ σκιαρῆ καλ χρυσέοις καρποῖς βέβριθεν . . .  
. . . παρὰ δέ σφισιν εὐανθήδης τέθαλεν θλόβος.

<sup>2</sup> . . . κιν ό οὐρανία συνέχει,  
νιφέσσο' Αἴτνα, πάνετες χίονος δξειας τιθήναι·  
τᾶς ἐρεύγονται μὲν ἀπλάτου πυρὸς ἀγνύταται  
ἐκ μυχῶν παγαλ· ποταμοὶ δ' ἀμέραιοιν μὲν προχέοντι ρέον καπνοῦ  
αἴθων· δλλ' ἐν δρφναισιν πέτρας  
φολυισσα κυλινδομένα φλόξ εἰς βαθεῖαν φέρει πέντον πλάκα σὺν πατάγῳ.

*Pyth. i.*

Compare Pindar's contemporary Aeschylus, speaking also of Etna—

"Whence hereafter shall burst forth streams of fire with fierce jaws devouring  
the level fields of fertile Sicily :"

. . . ἐνθεν ἐκραγήσονται ποτε  
ποταμοὶ πυρὸς δάπτοντες ἀγρίας γνάθους  
τῆς καλλικάρπου Σικελίας λευρός γύας.

*Prom. Vinct. 367.*

And then the Greek personifying manner comes in, and he tells how it is Typhos, the crawling monster, who sends forth these dread torrents, which even passers-by hear with wondering awe. This picture has a power hitherto not found in Greek song ; a passionate Dantesque reality :—It is, in fact, the record of a great eruption three years earlier.

Somewhat earlier also the deeply feeling Ibykus of Rhegium sings how Spring-time sets free all Nature, whilst Love brings him no release—

Truly in Spring the apple-trees of Kydon draw moisture from the river streams, there where is the pure unmown garden of the Maiden nymphs, and the vine-shoots swell and flourish beneath their overshadowing leafy branches : but with me Love for no one hour finds his rest.<sup>1</sup>

The contrast here drawn between Nature and human feeling, joy and sadness, it has been well observed by Mr. Farnell, is very rare in Hellenic poetry.

This Master has indeed a special love for the wild birds and flowers. Thus he describes a tree—

About whose topmost leaves are the gold-striped duck and the sea-purpled birds with changeful coloured neck, and the swift-flying halcyons.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the greatest losses in pure literature which we have sustained are that of the Roman historians from Livy to Tacitus (and even these fragmentary), and that of the Greek lyric poets. Amongst these the disappearance of Ibycus may, his meagre relics suggests, be placed in the first rank of perished charm and beauty.

Drama, in all ages, by its very nature so strictly confined to

<sup>1</sup> ἦρι μὲν αἱ τε Κυδώνιαι μαλίδες ἀρδόμεναι ρῶν  
ἐκ ποταμῶν, ἵνα ταρθένων κῆπος ἀκήρατος,  
αἱ τ' οἰνανθίδες αἰξόμεναι σκιεροῖσιν ὑφ' ἔρνεσιν  
οἰναρέοις θαλέθοισιν, ἐμοὶ δὲ "Ἔρος  
οὐδεμίαν κατάκοιτος ὥραν . . .

<sup>2</sup> τοῦ μὲν πετάλουσιν ἐπ' ἀκροτάτοισιν  
ξανθοὶ ποικιλοτανέλοτες  
αἰολόδειροι δὲ ἀλιτορφυρίδες καὶ  
ἀλεύοντες τανυσίττεροι.

human life, has been very sparing of landscape description, except in those short strokes which place at once before the spectator a background suitable to the action. Yet Aeschylus, the earliest preserved to us of the Athenian dramatists,—in magnificent power the greatest, as Sophocles has the most exquisite art,—was naturally led, in his *Prometheus Bound*, to some attempt at painting the landscape wherein the scene was presumably laid by ancient legend. And in this, as more or less in the passages quoted from the lyric poets, we find the first great advance made beyond that introduction of Nature simply by way of direct comparison with man which Homer so splendidly exhibits. It is still, however, with reference to humanity that she appears ; we have no description for its own sake, unless the night scene by Alkman be an exception ; but that reaches us only as an isolated quotation, and we know not what relation it bore to the poem in which it was contained.

The *Prometheus* lifts us at once within the mountain range of Scythia, and, in the primitive absence of stage scenery, Aeschylus has driven the landscape into the mind of his hearers by his own amazing force of language, describing the Titanic rock-world, in which he was obviously at home. Thus, at the opening of the play we find the god Hephaestus thus threatening the hero—

O bright - thoughted child of right - counselling Themis,  
against my will must I nail thee unwilling with indissoluble  
bonds of brass to this solitary rock, where thou shalt perceive  
neither voice nor form of any man, and scorched by the sun's  
bright flame thy skin shall lose its bloom : But, to thy joy, shall  
that glare be veiled by night with her spangled robe, and sun  
again disperse the hoar-frost of morning.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> τῆς δρθοβούλου Θέμιδος αἰτυμῆτα πᾶν,  
δικοντά σ' ἄκων δισλόντος χαλκεύμασι  
προστασσαλεύσω τῷδ' ἀπανθρώπῳ πάγῳ,  
ἴν' οὐτέ φωνὴν οὔτε τον μορφὴν βροτῶν  
δψει, σταθευτὸς δ' ἡλιον φοίβῃ φλογὶ<sup>2</sup>  
χροᾶς ἀμειψεις δυθος· δομένῳ δέ σαι  
ἡ ποικιλεύμων νὺξ ἀποκρύψει φάσι,  
πάχνην θ' ἐψαν ήλιος σκεδᾷ πάλιν.

*Prom. Vinct.* 18.

The poet's interest in Alpine heights—so unfrequent in ancient days—again appears when Prometheus marks out her wide wandering future to the goddess Io—

She must pass a river before thou shalt reach Caucasus himself, loftiest of mountains, where from his very brow the stream bubbles out in its strength. But over-climbing the star-neighbouring peaks, thou must take the southward road. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Then, in a wild earthquake-volcano convulsion of Nature that majestic drama closes—

And truly [says Prometheus] in deed now, and not in word any longer, Earth is shaken : a thunder echoing from the deep growls near us, fiery wreaths of lightning blaze out, whirlwinds eddy the dust, and the blasts of all winds leap forth, each against the other blowing discordantly, and sky is confused with ocean. . . . O holy Mother mine, O ethereal heaven circling round, the light of all things,—ye see what injustice I suffer.<sup>2</sup>

What a change in tone, in music, and in imagery is here, as with Pindar, from the lovely sweet soft lyrics of the earlier day ! —like the contrast between Elizabethan love-songs and the

<sup>1</sup> πρὶν ἀπὸ τρὸς αὐτὸν Καύκασον μόλυς, δρῶν  
οὐψιστον, ἐνθα ποταμὸς ἐκφυσᾷ μένος  
κροτάφων ἀπ' αὐτῶν· ἀστρογείτονας δὲ χρὴ  
κορυφὰς ὑπερβάλλουσαν ἐς μεσημβρινὴν  
βῆμαι κέλευθον. . . .

Prom. Vinct. 719.

<sup>2</sup> καὶ μὴν ἔργῳ  
κούκι ἔτι μόθῳ  
χθὼν σεσάλευται·  
βρυχίᾳ δ' ἡχώ παραμυκάται  
βροντῇ, Ἐλικες δ' ἐκλαμπούσι  
στεροπῇς ζάπυροι,  
στρόμβοι δὲ κόνιν εἰλίσσονται·  
σκιρτῷ δ' ἀνέμων πνεύματα πάντων  
εἰς ἀλληλα  
στάσιν ἀντίτινουν ἀποδεκνύμενα·  
ξυντετάρακται δ' αἰθήρ πόντῳ· . . .  
ῶ μητρὸς ἐμῆς σέβας, ὡ πάντων  
αἰθήρ κοινὸν φάσι εἰλίσσων,  
έσορφες μ' ὡς ἔκδικα πάσχω.

Prom. Vinct. 1080.

gloom of Hamlet or Macbeth—between Claude and Rembrandt in landscape—the Sicilian Bellini and the Teutonic Beethoven.

In the choral lyrics, however, it is that the Athenian playwrights generally place their references to Nature. Such is the famous passage in the *Oedipus at Kolonus* of Sophocles, when the aged king, victim of such fearful calamities, is approaching his place of final rest by the sacred grove, at the

Gleaming Kolonus rock, where the thrilling nightingale most loves to sing under the green coverts, remaining constant to the dark brown ivy, and the inviolable foliage of the god; the wood with its thousand fruits and leaves sun-proof unto touchable of any gale.<sup>1</sup>

With what obvious beauty is Nature here brought in as the contrast—the relief—to the human heart! It is the same approach to modern feeling which we have already found in the lyrical Ibykus. Even when set forth in the inevitable baldness of prose, this may take us back to the severe style of Athens in the fifth century.

Another Sophoclean landscape I will also add, in Dean Plumptre's graceful version. After the epic way it presents a comparison with the calamitous woes of the House of Labdacus—

As when a wave, where Thracian blasts blow strong  
On that tempestuous shore,  
Up surges from the depth beneath the sea,  
And from the deep abyss  
Rolls the black wind-vex'd sand;

<sup>1</sup> τὸν ἀργῆτα Κολωνόν, ἐνθ' ἀ λγεια μυνύρεται θαμίζουσα μάλιστ' ἀηδῶν χλωραῖς ὑπὸ βάσσαις, τὸν οἰνῶπ' ἀνέχουσα κισσὸν καὶ τὰν ἀβατον θεοῦ φυλλάδα μυριόκαρπον ἀνήλιον ἀνήρεμον τε πάντων χειμώνων . . .

*Oed. Col. 670.*

And every jutting peak that drives it back  
Re-echoes with the roar.<sup>1</sup>

But such outbursts are only too rare: Euripides and Aristophanes, so far as I have noted, rarely going beyond somewhat common phrases, or turning at once to mythological conventionality. Yet the first Chorus in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes has given him the opportunity for a very noble landscape, sung by the Clouds themselves in person, before they rise in view of the spectators—

Ever-flowing Clouds, let us lift on high our own bright dewy form [φύσιν] from our father the deep-resounding Ocean, to the tree-crested tops of high mountains, that we may view the far-shining peaks and holy earth nourishing her fruits, and the roaring of divine rivers and the deep murmuring cry of the sea: for the unweared Eye of the aether is flashing with its brilliant rays.<sup>2</sup>

After which the Clouds (as Mr. Ruskin has noted) are described with equal truth and beauty, as seen by Socrates on the hillside: “Coming softly, through the hollows and “the thickets, trailing aslant in multitudes.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> δρυοιν ώστε ποντίαις  
οἴδμα δυσπνήσιος ὅταν  
Θρήσσασιν ἔρεβος ὑφαλον ἐπιδράμη πνοᾶς,  
κυλίνδει βυσσόθεν κελαινὰν  
θύνα καὶ δυσάνεμον,  
στόνῳ βρέμοντι δ' ἀντικλῆγες ἀκτα.

*Antig.* 586.

<sup>2</sup> ἀέναιοι Νεφέλαι,  
ἀρθῶμεν φανερὰ δροσερὰν φύσιν εὐάγγητον,  
πατρὸς ἀπ' Ὀκεανοῦ βαρυαχέος  
ὑψηλῶν δρέων κορυφὰς ἔπι  
δευδροκόνους, ἵνα  
τηλεφανεῖσ σκοτιάς ἀφορώμεθα  
καρπός τ' ἀρδομέναν λεπάν χθόνα  
καὶ ποταμῶν ἡαθέων κελαδήματα  
καὶ πόντος κελάδοντα βαρύβραυμον.  
ὅμμα γὰρ αἰθέρος ἀκάματον σελαγεῖται  
μαρμαρέαις ἐν αὔγαις.

<sup>3</sup> . . . δρῶ κατιούσας  
ἡσυχῇ αὐτάς . . . χωροῦσ' αἴται πάνυ πολλαί,  
διὰ τῶν κοιλῶν καὶ τῶν δασέων, αἴται πλάγαι.

*Clouds* 275 and 323.

In the beautiful preface to Mr. Mackail's *Anthology*, when reaching the Alexandrian period—say from 300 B.C. onwards—he notes : “In revulsion from the immense accumulation of “material wealth in this period, a certain refined simplicity “was then the ideal of the best minds, as it was afterwards in “the early Roman Empire, as it is in our own day. The “charm of the country was, perhaps for the first time, fully “realised ; the life of gardens became a passion, and hardly “less so the life of the opener air, of the hill and meadow, of “the shepherd and hunter, the farmer and fisherman. . . . Sick “of cities, the imagination turned to an Arcadia that thence-“forth was to fill all poetry with the music of its names,”—Ladon, Erymanthus, Cylléné. What seems conscious sensibility to nature, in short, now reveals itself: delight in the landscape for its own sake, yet without rejection of its divine impersonating indwellers : God, as it were, may I say ? walking with man in the lovely paradise prepared for him.

This more modern chord we hear first and perhaps most exquisitely in the bucolic Idylls of Theocritus. These “little “Epics” are indeed primarily concerned with man and woman, an aim which they unite with landscape in its wider sense, including, that is, the life of the country folk. Yet, though his Idylls, in the phrase of the lovely festival song (*Thalysia*), breathe of summer, of fruit and flowers and other country sights, yet hardly any pure descriptive passages appear. One such we find in the Idyll just named, painting the scene where the rustic feast is held : how they

Reclined on low couches of the odorous rush, rejoicing, and on fresh-cut vine leaves ; and above their heads waved elm and poplar, and the holy stream close by went murmuring as it ran down from the cave of the Nymphs. And meanwhile on the shady boughs the noisy husky Cicadas were busy chirping, and far off in thick thorn-bushes the thrush murmured, crested lark and goldfinch sang, turtle-dove moaned, the tawny bees flew round about the fountains : all things breathed of summer, all of the sweet-scented fruiting time.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> . . . ἐν τε βαθέλαις  
ἀδελασ σχίροιο χαμενώσιν ἐκλινθῆμες

As, however, has been observed, the lingering sentiment of this beautiful picture is rather Latin than Greek: and so perhaps the old Sicilian blood, allied to the Italian, may have made itself felt in certain earlier poems which Theocritus possibly had before him. But I offer such *racial* hints with diffidence and doubt.

Or lastly, take this fragment paraphrased from the Cyclops' song to his Love—

Another music then we hear,  
A cry from the Sicilian dell,  
“Here ‘mid sweet grapes and laurel dwell;  
“Slips by from wood-girt Aetna’s dome  
“Snow-cold the stream and clear :—  
“Hither to me, come, Galataea, come !”<sup>1</sup>

Let me add a mountain woodside scene, and a pretty simile, from the gracious poet, so loved of Vergil and of Tennyson.

Castor and Pollux, voyaging in the good ship *Argo*, have come ashore and are wandering on the Bebrycian hills—

And they found an ever-flowing spring brimming with pure water under a smooth cliff; the lisping pebbles below seemed crystal or silver. High, near them, grew pines and white poplars and plane trees, and the cypress leafy to its summit; and odorous

Ἐν τε νεοτριπάτους γεγαθῆτε οἰναρέγοι.  
πολλὰ δ’ ἀμύλις ὑπερθε κατὰ κρατὸς δονέοντο  
αἴγειροι πτελέαν τε· τὸ δ’ ἐγγύθεν Ιερὸν θδωρ  
Νυμφᾶν ἔξ αἰτροι κατειθόμενον κελάρυς.  
τοι δὲ ποτὶ σκιεράσι δροδαμησιν αἰθαλίωνες  
τέττιγες λαλαγεῦντες ἔχον πόνον· ἀ δ’ ὀδολυγών  
τηλόθεν ἐν πυκινῆσι βάτων τρύζεσκεν ἀκάνθαις.  
δειδον κόρυδοι καὶ ἀκανθῖδες, ἐστενε τρυγών,  
πωτῶντο ξούθαλ περὶ πίθακας ἀμφὶ μέλισσαι·  
πάντ’ ὕσδεν θέρεος μάλα πλονος, ὕσδε δ’ ὅπωρας.

*Id. vii, 132.*

<sup>1</sup> ἀλλ’ ἀφίκει τύ ποθ’ ἀμέ, καὶ ἔξεισι οὐδὲν Ἐλασσον· . . .  
ἐντὶ δάφναι τηρεῖ, ἐντὶ ράδιναι κυπάρισσαι,  
ἔστι μέλας κισσός, ἔστι ἀμπελός ἀ γλυκύκαρπος,  
ἔστι ψυχρὸν θδωρ, τῷ μωι ἀ πολυδένδρεος Αἴτρα  
λευκᾶς ἐκ χιύνος ποτὸν ἀμβρόσιον προΐητι.

*Id. xi, 40.*

flowers,—many as when Spring is ending break forth in the meadows,—where the hairy bees love to haunt.<sup>1</sup>

Like as the swallow swiftly flies back to gather fresh morsels for her little ones in the nest.<sup>2</sup>

—Such, and swifter, says Theocritus, flies the maid returning to her lover.

I turn now to that miscellaneous gathering, the great Greek *Anthology*; those blossoms of all kinds in form and scent and colour plucked and bound in garlands through not far from two thousand years—say 700 B.C. to 1000 A.D.—a truly wonderful example of national poetic continuity. Here, as before, Man largely predominates over Nature. Yet the spiritual quality in her—her unity, however unconsciously—is maintained through the frequent mythological references. Only by moments, glimpses such as we catch from the railway window, is the landscape visible. But the vast number of these beautiful miniature poems gives opportunity for endless natural hints, which, as we have just seen in Theocritus, are most frequent at and after the Alexandrian epoch. Indeed, in the *Anthology*, we see Hellenism in its most charming phase; it is a phase of life, to quote a striking remark from Mommsen, “with the purity and beauty which it presents in the quiet ‘homestead, after which history happily does not inquire any ‘more than it inquires after history.”<sup>3</sup> And as this collection is comparatively little known, I will venture upon a few specimens which may show the general manner, though perhaps even more than in case of the great poets, will translation

<sup>1</sup> εὗρον δ' ἀέναον κρήνην ὑπὸ λισσᾶδι πέτρῃ  
ὑδατὶ πεπληθυῖαι ἀκηράτῳ· αἱ δ' ὑπένερθεν  
λάλαι κρυστάλλῳ ἥδ' ἀργύρῳ ινδάλλοντο  
ἐκ βυθοῦ· ὑψηλαὶ δὲ πεφύκεσσαν ἀγχόθι πεῦκαι  
λεύκαι τε πλάτανοι τε καὶ ἀκρόκομοι κυπάρισσοι,  
ἀνθεῖ τ' εὐώδη, λασταις φίλα ἔργα μελίσσαις,  
δσσ' ἔαρος λήγοντος ἐπιβρύνει ἀν λειμῶνας.

*Id. xx., 37.*

<sup>2</sup> μάστακα δοῖσα τέκνοισι υπωροφίοισι χελιδών  
ἄψορρον ταχινὰ πέτεται βίον ἄλλον ἀγείρειν.

*Id. xiv., 39.*

<sup>3</sup> *Provinces of the Roman Empire*, chap. vii.

(which I have generally framed upon the editor's) inevitably miss the charm of the originals, transferred thus into blank English from "that language," to quote Mr. Mackail's expression,<sup>1</sup> "which is to all other languages as a gem to an ordinary pebble."

To Leonidas of Tarentum in the third century B.C. belongs this picture of a roadside pool—

Drink not here, traveller, of this tepid water, which the sheep at pasture have filled with mud; passing but a little way over the ridge where heifers graze, there by that shepherds' stone-pine thou wilt find babbling through the oozing rock a spring colder than northern snow.<sup>2</sup>

About 50 B.C. Antiphilus, after the fashion of the excellent landscapist Crome, in his favourite scenes from Norfolk, drew this oak-grove—7

High-hung boughs of the tall oak, shadowy height over those who shelter from the sheer heat, leaves roofing us closer than tiles, dwellings of the wood-pigeon and the cricket, O sprays at noon tide save me too as I lie beneath your leafage, me a fugitive from the sun.<sup>3</sup>

If both of our beautiful vignettes seem to end in the moral of human comfort, I do not read in this the want of

<sup>1</sup> *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology*, with revised text and translation (Longmans, 1890). To this beautiful work I am here very greatly indebted. Let all get it, who have the noble ambition *integros accedere fontes*.

<sup>2</sup> Μὴ σύ γε ποιονδιοιο περίπλουν ίλιος ὥδε  
τοῦτο χαραράιηθερμόν, δύτα, πίγις,  
ἀλλὰ μολὼν μάλα τυτθὸν ὑπὲρ δαμαλήβοτον ἀκρα  
κεῖσέ γε πάρ κείνη ποιμενίᾳ πίτνι  
εὐρήσεις κελαρύζον ἐνκρήνου διὰ πέτρης  
νῦμα Βορεαῖς ψυχρότερον νιφάδος.

vi, iii.

<sup>3</sup> Κλῶνες ἀπηρίοι ταναῆς δρύς, εἴσκιον ὕψος  
ἀνδράσιν ἀκρητον καῦμα φυλασσούμενοι,  
εὐπέταλοι, κεράμωρ στεγανώτεροι, οἰκλα φαττῶν,  
οἰκλα τεττίγων, ἔνδιοι ἀκρέμονες,  
κήμε τὸν ὑμετέραισιν ὑποκλινθέντα κόμαισιν  
ῥύσασθ' ἀκτίνων ἡελου φυγάδα.

vi, xvii.

due feeling for Nature ; it is, rather, the exigence under which the epigram lies to bind itself together by a leading image.

These pictures might be named realistic. An epigram, ascribed to Plato, and worthy of his genius, is an example of that mythological treatment of the Divine in nature which pervaded Greek poetry even long into Christian times.

Let the shaggy cliff of the Dryads be silent, and the springs of the rock, and the many-mingled bleating of the ewes : for Pan himself now sounds his musical pipe, running his supple lips over the joined reeds ; and around with active feet the nymphs of the water and the nymphs of the oakwood have formed their dance.<sup>1</sup>

We have seen the sea-view also translated into mythology as far back as Hesiod, and we may trace it to Cometas in the ninth century of our era. By that time Pan and the like can have been hardly more than figures of speech ; yet, even so, they carried on the continuity of Hellenic life and literature ; their recurrence may have even been an unconscious impulse of that desire to combine what was truly religious in the old Pagan thought with Christianity, or at least to recognise its existence, which long inspired many of the greatest Eastern theologians, onward from St. Paul's discourse on the Areopagus with his emphatic quotation from the poetry of Aratus or Cleanthes. But, indeed, what God and Nymph and Faun exactly expressed to earlier Pagan Hellas, when introduced in landscape description, we cannot, I think, more than partially grasp. One thing only we may hold as certain : that the poets looked on Nature with eyes keenly alive to all her beauty, and that their sense of this found expression and was deepened through such religious references.

<sup>1</sup> Συγάτω λάσιον Δρυάδων λέπας, οὐ τ' ἀπὸ πέτρας  
κρουνοί, καὶ βληχὴ πουλυμηγῆς τοκάδων  
αὐτὸς ἐτελ σύργγι μελοδεται εύκελάδῳ Πάν  
ίγρδν λεις σευκτῶν χεῖλος ὑπὲρ καλάμων,  
αἱ δὲ πέριξ θαλεροῦσι χορὸν ποσὶν ἐστήσαντο  
Τδριάδες Νύμφαι, Νύμφαι Αμαδρυάδες.

It seems, however, to me highly probable that, despite the elegance and charm of these personifications— even now, indeed, far from exhausted, and, whilst true culture in education survives, inexhaustible—yet Greek poetry was at times hampered and conventionalised by its mythology ; the clear view of Nature as she is restricted ; a monotony thrown over the landscape. And the epigrammatic form, we might add, lent itself easily to this mode of treatment, and hence to these results.

By Meleager of the Syrian Gadara, living 100 B.C., the most richly inventive and vivid colourist (the word truly renders his half-Oriental style) among these fascinating singers, I give a little floral love-song of much grace and tenderness—

Now blooms the white violet, now the shower-loving narcissus,  
now the lilies that wander over the hills ; and now, a spring-flower herself among the flowers, the darling Zenophilé, that sweet tempting rose, has blossomed. Meadows, why laugh vainly in your shining foliage ? Better than sweet breathing garlands is my maiden.<sup>1</sup>

Hear now an invitation to the woods—

Come and sit under my stone-pine, sounding sweet as honey  
as it bends to the soft western breeze ; and lo ! here is the honey-dropping fountain, where I bring sweet slumber, playing on my lonely reeds.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, Moero of Byzantium (third century B.C.), in one of

<sup>1</sup> "Ηδη λευκῶν θάλλει, θάλλει δὲ φίλομβρος  
νάρκισσος, θάλλει δὲ οὐρσίφοιτα κρίνα·  
ήδη δ' ἡ φιλέραστος, ἐν ἀνθεσιν ὄρμον ἀνθός,  
Ζηνοφίλα Πειθόνις ἥδη τεθῆλε ρόδον.  
λειμώνες, τί μάταια κόμαις ἐπὶ φαιδρά γελάτε ;  
ἀ γὰρ πᾶς κρέσσων ἀδυπτύνων στεφάνων.

I, xix.

<sup>2</sup> "Ερχεο καὶ κατ' ἐμὰν ζευν πίτυν, ἀ τὸ μελιχρόν  
πρὸς μαλακοὺς ἡχεῖ κεκλιμένα Ζεφύρους·  
ἡνίδε καὶ κρούνισμα μελισταγές, ἐνθα μελισδῶν  
ἥδην ἔρημαίος ὑπνον ἀγω καλάμοις.

VI, vi.

Sleep itself seems to breathe through the lovely lines of this unknown singer.

the only two epigrams by her which time spares us, has a little Elegy, addressed to Aphrodité of the Golden House, upon one of those simple religious offerings which constantly meet us in the *Anthology*; a poem true womanly in its feeling, and worthy of Sappho in musical tenderness—

O vine-cluster, full of the juice of Dionysus, thou liest in the golden portico of Aphrodite: nor ever more shall thy mother vine, twining round thee her fair tendril, above thy head put forth her fragrant leaf.<sup>1</sup>

How modern is this in its gentle human sentiment! Yet not more, perhaps, so than a fragment from the gifted and lost dramatist Menander, which, in its breadth of view, suggesting at the same time a strange likeness in unlikeness to the great Hebrew Psalm of Creation, may here find a fit place in this imperfect notice of the Greek poetry of Nature.

That man I hold happiest who, having without sense of pain beheld these holy wonders, the common sun, stars, sea, clouds, fire, has gone quickly thither whence he came. Should he live a hundred years, these sights will never fail him; or should he live but few days, never [elsewhere] will he see things more wonderful.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Κεῖσαι δὴ χρυσέαν ὑπὸ παστάδα τὰν Ἀφροδίτας,  
βότρυν, Διονύσου πληθύμενος σταγόνι,  
οὐδὲ ἔτι τοι μάτηρ ἐρατὸν περὶ κλῆμα βαλοῦσα  
φύσει ὑπέρ κρατὸς νεκτάρεον πέταλον.

II, xxii.

<sup>2</sup> τοῦτον εὐτυχέστατον λέγω  
δότις θεωρήσας ἀλύπως, Παρμενών,  
τὰ σεμιὰ ταῦτ', ἀπῆλθεν δθεν ἥλθεν ταχύ,  
τὸν ἥλιον τὸν κοινόν, δαστρ', θδωρ, νέφη,  
πῦρ ταῦτα καν ἔκατὸν ἔτη βιώ ἀεί<sup>2</sup>  
ὅψει παρέντα, καν ἐνιαυτοὺς σφέδρ' ὀλίγους,  
σεμινθερα τούτων ἔτερα δ' οὐκ ὅψει ποτέ.

Menander, *Hypobolimaeus*, Fr. 2.

Gray was so deep and delicate a student, and so given to adorn his *operae carmina* with flowers gathered from all gardens, that I am tempted to find here the lovely phrase of his *Vicissitude* Ode, painting the delight of a sick man's recovery:

*The common sun, the air, the skies,  
To him are opening paradise,*

Two gracious little ditties, probably for girls or children, shall close my Greek specimens. It is sad that so few such songs have been preserved for us—

Where are my roses, where are my violets, where are my beautiful parsley leaves?

Here are your roses, here are your violets, here are your beautiful parsley leaves.<sup>1</sup>

Now the Rhodian carol, while the children went about begging nice presents—

Here, here is the swallow, bringing happy hours, happy years ; white below is she, black above. . . . But if you will not give, we will not put up with it, [we may carry off] the little wife who is sitting indoors, little she is, easily we shall carry her. . . . Open, open the door to the swallow!<sup>2</sup>

—But it is time to make the great transition from Hellas to Latium.

<sup>1</sup> ποῦ μοι τὰ ρέδα, ποῦ μοι τὰ λα, ποῦ μοι τὰ καλὰ σέλινα ;  
ταδὶ τὰ ρέδα, ταδὶ τὰ λα, ταδὶ τὰ καλὰ σέλινα.

<sup>2</sup> Ήλθ', ηλθε χελιδών,  
καλὰς ὥρας ἀγουστα,  
καλοὺς ἔνιαυτούς,  
ἐπὶ γαστέρᾳ λευκά,  
ἐπὶ νῶτα μέλαινα . . .  
. . . εἰ δὲ μή, οὐκ ἔάσομεν, . . .  
. . . φέρωμεν . . .  
. . . τὰν γυναικά τὰν ἔσω καθημέναν·  
μικρὰ μέν ἔστι, βαδίως μὲν οἰσομεν· . . .  
ἄνοιγ', ἀνοιγε τὰν θύραν χειδόνι.

Bergk (1843).

## CHAPTER IV

### *LANDSCAPE IN LUCRETIUS, VERGIL, AND OTHER AUGUSTAN POETS.*

IT may here be useful briefly to compare the general tone of Greek and Latin literature, with their remoteness or kinship to our own, as it will be found to have some bearing upon our special task.

In one sense the Greek is nearer to us than any literature dating earlier than the sixteenth century. *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which we may with probability regard as three or four hundred years anterior to the epoch 800 B.C. assigned by Herodotus,<sup>1</sup> have such a freshness of feeling, so complete a humanity, a force in drawing character or rendering passion so sheer, direct, and simple, that they speak with us, face to face as it were, even nearer at times than some of our latest poets. Plato, in prose more perfect and finished than any one since has mastered, shows a depth of reflection, a penetrative insight revealing soul to soul, such that we feel it true for all time—in advance, one might almost say, of any to-morrow. Yet in Greek literature at all times we come occasionally upon certain elements which divide it more than the Latin from modern thought and feeling. These elements, strangely alien from us, cropping out suddenly in myth and image, thought and passion, I would venture in some degree to refer

<sup>1</sup> The Greeks, having no history or clear tradition of their own past, naturally had not the power to look boldly back, when dating their antiquities : as the modern world has a difficulty in accepting the far-off dates now assigned to Egyptian or Assyrian monuments—not to speak of pre-glacial man.

to the fact that, unlike any other Western literatures, the sources of Hellenic art and thought, the long centuries of development, the great previous civilisations, are but faintly known to us. That oriental ideas and beliefs were strongly felt we do know ; yet they seem to remain inextricably immanent in the Greek mind, despite the labour and the learning which mythologists have devoted to their special province.

It may, however, be feared that a greater bar lies between us and Hellenism, especially during its great period, in the very qualities which give their special charm, their magic, to Greek art and Greek poetry,—the dominant sensitiveness, equally delicate and vivid, of the leading Hellenic races ; the inseparable presence in their work of grace, of flexibility ; the love, the worship, the deification of beauty. The conquest of the ancient civilisations by the Teutonic races, the consequent infusion, wide and deep, of a temper of mind more gloomily serious than the Greek, while far less sensitive to or fruitful in art,—Christianity, with eye and soul set on the further life,—the new interests of physical science, ever enlarging, ever more absorbing,—the mechanical tone and ways of the modern world in every region,—all these things are against art, against fruitful repose, against individuality, in a word, against beauty as the *sine qua non*, the final end of poetry. It is not meant that these hostile elements can wholly exclude a true initiation into the Hellenic spirit, but they narrow the sphere of its influence, but they are a cloud over the sun. An Athenian of the Periclean age, anywhere in modern civilised lands, would feel the sky as iron above him.

In Roman literature, on the other hand, as in the Roman mind and character, we feel ourselves at once in the atmosphere of a sterner morality, of more practical aims, of the Roman *gravitas*, of the Imperial majesty ; yet, at the same time, of a greater homeliness, a profounder passion for country life. The beautiful, however, as such, in their poetry is largely derived, not from unknown sources, but from the Grecian fountains, happily still flowing for those who have the good sense and good taste to frequent them. Though in some manner Greek literature in Byzantium really long survived

Roman, yet Rome has inevitably become nearer us than Athens; has influenced us, if less in regard to poetry and beauty, yet more deeply—often far more deeply—in law, politics, ethics. “It will,” in fact, “be generally conceded that the ideas and “institutions of modern Europe are derived by more direct “filiation from those of Rome than of Greece.”<sup>1</sup>

Hence, to turn to our own subject, the expression of Nature which appears in Latin poetry is, on the whole, closer to us than the Greek; it touches the heart more intimately; it has even at last, we shall find, a certain accent as if of romanticism before its time. But the loss of almost all non-dramatic Roman verse before Lucretius and Catullus, and the rapid declension of poetry after the fifty years (say 44 B.C.—17 A.D.) of Augustan splendour, greatly limits our field when compared with the many centuries of Greek productivity.

Yet a somewhat earlier date supplies one little country vignette. It is found in a fragment of the *Oenomaus* of the dramatist, L. Attius (born 170 B.C.)—

By chance [it was] before Dawn, harbinger of burning rays,  
when husbandmen pack off the horned creatures from their sleep  
to the meadow, to cleave the red dew-sprinkled earth with the  
ploughshare, and turn up the clods from the soft soil.<sup>2</sup>

The fresh breath of an Italian—of a Devon—daybreak (note the *red* soil) is truly in these simple rustic lines.

Passing now to that splendid outburst above named, among the four first-rate poets of the period—Catullus, Horace, Lucretius, Vergil<sup>3</sup>—I shall mainly take the last two for our brief survey. Indeed, this may be called a prescribed and natural order, owing to the peculiar relation of Vergil to Lucretius—a relation, as we shall see, at once of indebtedness and of protest.

<sup>1</sup> Merivale, *History of the Romans*. And we may just note that it is the same in regard to architecture.

<sup>2</sup> forte ante Auroram, radiorum ardendum indicem,  
cum e somno in segetem agrestis cornutos crient,  
ut rorulentas terras ferro rufidas  
proscindant, glebasque arvo ex molli exsuscent.

<sup>3</sup> Why not correct a long-established blunder, and spell the name as he assuredly spelt it—the sound remaining unchanged?

The distinct expression of religious sentiment, wonder, and love for Nature on her own account—in these points the Roman landscape poetry is often most clearly contrasted with the Hellenic. How much Lucretius (born c. 100 B.C.) derived from Greek philosophy we scantily know. But at least he revealed to the world Nature as a power omnipresent, creative, regulative of the whole Cosmos—a conception, as Sellar finely remarks,<sup>1</sup> which is not so much pantheistic as “an unconscious, half-realised theism.” To this power, Man, for whom she has no sympathy, must submit; with this only Divine force recognised by the poet our destiny is to struggle. Yet the struggle is itself doomed to fail. Earth is progressively losing her fertility, the destructive powers are gaining superiority over the restorative. The world is preparing for the “single day” which will end all.

This profound melancholy, pervading the great poem *On the Nature of Things*, is doubtless partly due to the convulsed state of Roman politics and the decline of Lucretius' own party, partly to the “blot upon the blood,” alluded to by early tradition, and set forth by Tennyson with truly Lucretian intensity of power. But by that tyrannous gloom the vital force of his soul, *vivida vis animi* (to use his powerful phrase), seems to have been only quickened to the observation of Nature; driving him, one may believe, as his poem sets before us, into wastes and wild woods and caverns—the world of what we call prehistoric man. Yet, meanwhile, the poet's deep sense of a contrasted beauty in Nature never fails, breaking out in many brief hints and unexpected pictorial flashes; all which he rendered “with a clearness of “outline and a startling vividness,” in which “he is unrivalled “in antiquity save by Homer.”<sup>2</sup> Intensity and condensation, these are the notes of his singular genius; akin in these to Archilochus and Pindar, to Tacitus and Dante. I will try to give a few examples.

In his opening verses Nature, figured in her creative aspect as *Alma Venus*, moves through seas and mountains and

<sup>1</sup> *The Roman Poets of the Republic*, to which I am here much indebted.

<sup>2</sup> Sellar, *ut ante*.

*hurrying rivers and the leafy homes of birds and the green meadows.*<sup>1</sup> So, again, a charming vision, not rejecting aid from the mythology which the poet disbelieved, personifies the approach of the “sweet season” in four lovely lines, which remind us of the old English song, *Sumer is i-cumen in*—

Spring is coming and Venus, and her winged herald [Cupido] goes before, whilst, close on the footsteps of Zephyr, Flora, mother of flowers, scatters her blossoms before them, and fills all the path with glorious scents and colours.<sup>2</sup>

How completely is this in the style of the Italian Renaissance!—the words may indeed have been before the mind of her great artists from Botticelli to Guido.<sup>3</sup>

With an insight, broad and subtle and at once, he thus paints the cave-dwellers of prehistoric man—

Finally, the wanderers would make their dwelling in the familiar woodland haunts of the Nymphs, whence they marked how the running waters slipping over the moistened rocks washed them with liberal overflow, trickling over green mossy beds, while part escaped to break forth over the level plain.<sup>4</sup>

But the terrible side of Nature—figured as Mavors in the opening lines of the poem—is always also before the soul of Lucretius, when he sets forth those natural aspects which dominated and crushed the early races of mankind—

They placed the mansions and temples of the gods in the

<sup>1</sup> — per maria ac montis fluviosque rapacis  
frondiferasque domos avium camposque virentis.

i. 17 (text of Munro, whose English version has also been  
before me, ed. 1873).

<sup>2</sup> it ver et Venus, et Veneris praenuntius ante  
pennatus graditur, Zephyri vestigia propter  
Flora quibus mater praespargens ante viai  
cuncta coloribus egregiis et odoribus opplet.

v, 737.

<sup>3</sup> The *editio princeps* was printed c. 1473 at Brescia.

<sup>4</sup> denique nota vagi silvestria templa tenebant  
Nymphaeum, quibus e scibant umori' fluenta  
lubrica proluvie larga lavere umida saxa,  
umida saxa, super viridi stillantia musco,  
et partim plano scatere atque erumpere campo.

v, 948.

heavens, because through the heavens night and the moon seem to revolve, moon and day and night and the stern constellations of night and the night-roving torches of heaven and flying flames ; cloud, sun, rain, snow, winds, lightning, hail, and the rapid rattle, the huge murmurs of threatening thunder.<sup>1</sup>

*Murmura magna minarum*—the electric roll seems to pervade the stern, sonorous Latin.

But the poet must presently set forth, in the lines that follow, the ghastly moral to which his soul compelled him, imprisoned in the materialistic network of fatalism—

O miserable race of men, when they ascribed such things to the gods, and coupled them with bitter wrath ! what groanings for themselves did they then beget, what wounds for us, what tears for our children's children !<sup>2</sup>

The terrors which the aweful spectacle of the skies rouse in the thoughtful mind, he proceeds, are, not the weakness of humanity, but *The fear that we may haply find the power of the gods to be unlimited, and able to wheel the white stars in their varied motion*, and so to overthrow this universe.<sup>3</sup>

Compare with this—to anticipate for a moment—the words of the poet David—

I will consider Thy heavens,  
Even the work of Thy fingers ;  
The moon and the stars  
Which Thou hast ordained :—

<sup>1</sup> in caeloque deum sedes et tempa locarunt,  
per caelum volvi quia nox et luna videtur,—  
luna dies et nox et noctis signa severa  
noctivagaeque faces caeli flammæque volantes,  
nubila sol imbræ nix venti fulmina grando,  
et rapidi fremitus et murmura magna minarum.

V, 1188.

<sup>2</sup> o genus infelix humanum, talia divis  
cum tribuit facta atque iras adiunxit acerbas !  
quantos tum gemitus ipsi sibi, quantaque nobis  
volnera, quas lacrimas peperere minorib' nostris !

V, 1194.

<sup>3</sup> nequae forte deum nobis immensa potestas  
sit, vario motu quae candida sidera verset.

V, 1209.

What is man,  
That Thou art mindful of him,  
And the son of man  
That Thou visitest him?

What a gulf is here, between the corrosive gloom of the proud, hopeless Lucretius, and the consoling, animating humility of the rapt theist!

Nothing is more characteristic of Lucretius than the movement which he everywhere impresses on his descriptive scenes: true, in this, both to Homer and to poetry itself, which vindicates its place in landscape against painting, confined to a single moment—nowhere more than in the capacity to render successive situations. His preference, Sellar notes, was for the force and life of Nature, in contrast to mere form and colour. This, doubtless, was one reason for the marked interest which he shows in all the phenomena of cloud and tempest; although another reason we may find in the fact that this region lifted the soul from our small world toward the infinite stellar spaces around—from *Terra* to *Mundus*. Here he stands alone among classical poets, and in literature (our own, at least), we have to wait for Wordsworth and Shelley before cloud-land is so freely and accurately painted.

The first specimen I give may recall Wordsworth's splendid landscape in the *Excursion*,<sup>1</sup> with its

Fantastic pomp of structure without name,  
In fleecy clouds voluminous enwrapp'd.

Lucretius is speaking of the ghost-like shapes cast off from material things, which, in his philosophy, frequent space. Beside them, he says—

Some images there are spontaneously generated and formed by themselves in this lower heaven which is called air: . . . as at times we see clouds gather together easily into masses on high, and blot the calm, clear sky-face, fanning the air as they move. Thus often the countenances of Giants are seen flying along and carrying after them a broad shadow: sometimes great

<sup>1</sup> Book II.

mountains and rocks torn from the mountains advance and pass across the sun, and then a huge creature in its train will drag on other storm-clouds.<sup>1</sup>

These last grand figures have a parallel in Turner's splendid *Ulysses* landscape. In similar style (and with similar Turner-like power) the formation and burst of a thunderstorm is painted in Book vi. 189, and again 256; so deep a fascination had these half chaotic scenes over the poet's mind, unsympathetic in some degree to the Greek devotion to beauty, although perhaps akin to Aeschylus and Pindar. But, in fact, every natural phenomenon seized upon Lucretius with one undying passionate interest—*At all such, he says, a certain divine pleasure and shuddering awe possesses me.*<sup>2</sup>

Yet he could also see the beauty of a calmer landscape. Thus we find him painting how a cloud is formed; how

The golden morning light of the radiant sun reddens first over the grass, gemmed with dew, and the pools and ever-running rivers exhale a mist as the earth herself at times seems to smoke. And when these mists are all gathered together above, clouds now joining in a body on high, weave a veil below the heaven.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> sunt etiam quae sponte sua gignuntur et ipsa  
constituantur in hoc caelo qui dicitur aer.

ut nubes facile interdum concrescere in alto  
cernimus et mundi speciem violare serenam  
aera mulcentes motu. nam saepe Gigantum  
ora volare videntur et umbram ducere late,  
interdum magni montes avolsaque saxa  
montibus anteire et solem succedere praeter,  
inde alios trahere atque inducere belua nimbos.

IV, 131.

<sup>2</sup> his ibi me rebus quaedam divina voluptas  
percipit atque horror.

III, 28.

<sup>3</sup> aurea cum primum gemmantis rore per herbas  
matutina rubent radiati lumina solis  
exhalantque lacus nebulam fluiisque perennes,  
ipsaque ut interdum tellus fumare videtur;  
omnia quae sursum cum conciliantur, in alto  
corpo concreto subtexunt nubila caelum.

V, 461.

Again, speaking of the effect of habit in weakening wonder, he has a fine passage—

How splendid would be, when seen for the first time, the clear pure colour of the open sky, and what it contains, the wandering stars everywhere, and the moon and the sun dazzling above all . . . which now man's satiated eye never cares to look up at.<sup>1</sup>

Even the cultivated landscape of Italy had something of the charm for this stern philosopher which it held over the gracious-souled Vergil. He tells how mankind began to pass from the state of savagery until land cultivation began—

They would force the forests to recede daily higher up the mountain side and yield the ground below to culture, so that on upland and plain they might have meadows, tanks, streamlets, cornfields, and rejoicing vineyards ; and they allowed a gray-green strip of olives to run between as a bound-mark stretching over hillock and valley and level : as you now may see, how all the space that the countrymen decorate with sweet fruit-trees in rows, and all round wall it in by fair plantations, is mapped out with a varied beauty.<sup>2</sup>

But I must put a limit to illustrations of this great landscape painter, which might easily be multiplied tenfold, with one

<sup>1</sup> suspicio caeli clarum purumque colorem,  
quaeque in se cohibet, palantia sidera passim,  
lunamque et solis praeclara luce nitorem ;

quam tibi iam nemo, fessus satiate videndi,  
suspicere in caeli dignatur lucida tempa !

II, 1030.

<sup>2</sup> inque dies magis in montem succedere silvas  
cogebant infraque locum concedere cultis,  
prata lacus rivos segetes vinetaque laeta  
collibus et campis ut haberent, atque olearum  
caerula distinguens inter plaga currere posset  
per tumulos et convallis camposque profusa ;  
ut nunc esse vides vario distincta lepore  
omnia, quae pomis intersita dulcibus ornant  
arbustisque tenent felicibus opsita circum.

V, 1370.

How characteristic still of the Tuscan landscape is this picture !

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passage more, worthy perhaps to be called Lucretius' Hymn to Nature—

We are all sprung from heavenly seed : all have that same father, by whom mother earth rendered fruitful, when she has received the rainfall, bears goodly crops and happy trees and the race of man,—bearing also all kinds of brute creatures ; then supplying the food upon which all are nourished, and lead dear life and continue their race : whence with good cause she has gained the name Mother.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the deserts of weary argument and guess-work into which the Epicurean philosophy leads Lucretius, despite the blankness of his atomic creed, the iron heaven of fatalism always above him, his poetry has a fascination unique in literature ancient or modern. May we not truly say, that by no poet has sheer didactic material, and that mainly of plain physical order, been so permeated and vitalised by the might of genius ? His genius—and he would not have disdained the comparison—is like that electric flame which can subdue platinum. As it were, indeed, despite himself, he obeys the common law—once a poet always a poet. The examples I have given in prose, however feebly representing the solemn and determined march of his verses, like the tramp of the Roman legion advancing to battle, will, I would hope, have also displayed his vast power in the region of landscape ; the freshness and force of lines, which once read, can scarce be forgotten.

The attitude of Vergil (70-19 B.C.) toward his great predecessor, I have already noted as one of blended admiration and protest. It was doubtless the latter feeling—that of a certain opposition in religion and in philosophy—which led

<sup>1</sup> —caelesti sumus omnes semine oriundi ;  
omnibus ille idem pater est, unde alma liquentis  
umoris guttas mater cum terra recepit,  
feta parit nitidas fruges arbustaque laeta  
et genus humanum, parit omnia saecla ferarum,  
pabula cum praebet quibus omnes corpora pascunt  
et dulcem ducunt vitam prolemque propagant ;  
quaapropter merito maternum nomen adepta est.

his exquisite, his almost tremulous delicacy of mind never once to name the poet whose spell over him must have been constantly perceptible to every Roman student. Vast indeed is the contrast between the two—hardly less than the transit in imagination from Siberia to Italy. To Lucretius impassive feelingless law swayed the world, dead to mankind, who can only accept their fate. Vergil for this substitutes a vision of Providential rule, which teaches man by its constant order. Unlike Lucretius, he lived when the world was at length “lapt in universal law.” Yet a “pathetic undertone,” a “sad earnestness,” as Cardinal Newman has beautifully remarked, almost everywhere underlies his verse. He has the note of *yearning*. This was at least congruous with the Celtic sentiment which Vergil may have inherited from parents probably of that race. It was this sentiment which Tennyson had before him in his noble Hymn, addressing him as

Majestic in thy sadness at the doubtful doom of human kind.

For Vergil also recognises the inevitable struggle for life—the common end, which he has set forth in two lines of terrible force: *Our best days fly first; then disease creeps on, and the sadness of old age, and suffering sweeps us off, and the ruthless inclemency of death;*<sup>1</sup> to him, with the pre-Christian world in general (to quote Pascal’s powerful phrase), “the last act is “frightful, fair as the comedy may have been hitherto through-“out.” Man, however, is to resist that downward course of life and of Nature as a duty: *The Father of all himself ordains* the labour of man: and righteous Earth, he feels, *iustissima tellus*, will finally repay him. The glorification of Labour—*laborare et orare*—these phrases have been rightly suggested as summing up the moral of the *Georgics*.

It is, however, a different mood in which Vergil’s earliest work, the pastoral *Eclogues*, paint the landscape. Here we find his gracious receptivity of mind, “a great susceptibility to

<sup>1</sup> —subeunt morbi tristisque senectus  
et labor et durae rapit inclemens mortis.

*Georg. III, 67.*

What a darkness that may be felt is in those last four words!

"the beauty and power of Nature," which his friend Horace indicated when saying that *to Vergil the country loving Muses had granted tenderness and grace.*<sup>1</sup>

A simple physical delight in rural beauty, an almost passive enjoyment like that which some Greek epigrams express,—in these enchanting idylls rival and, as it were, enhance the charm with which they sing of human love: "They might," says Sellar, "be described as the glorification of the *dolce far niente* " of Italian life."

How should bare English prose represent the art peculiar to one of the greatest masters of style—perhaps the very greatest—known in poetry? Yet pardon must be asked and the attempt made. Landscape references pervade the *Eclogues*; but human passion constantly blends with and intensifies the hues of nature. It is in brief but perpetual allusions that the scenery is most often shown. "By a few simple words he calls up before our "minds the genial luxuriance of spring, the freshness of early "morning, the rest of all living things in the burning heat of "noon, the stillness of evening, the gentle imperceptible motions "of Nature, in the shooting up of the young alder-tree and in "the gradual colouring of the grapes on the sunny hill-sides."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the best example is Vergil's picture of his own home, when for a time restored to him after confiscation by the second Triumvirate, drawn in his peculiar imaginatively allusive mode of treating character, the writer's own figure delicately suppressed. A less fortunate neighbour is congratulating Vergil—

Here among familiar streams and holy fountains you would court the dark cool shade : from hence that hedge, your neighbour's boundary, whose willow blossoms are fed down by the bees of Hybla, with its ever-light whisper may tempt you often to sleep : here beneath the high rock the woodman shall sing forth to the breezes ; nor meanwhile will the hoarse wood-pigeons, your darlings, or the turtle-dove cease to moan from the sky-piercing elm-tree.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> molle atque facetum

Vergilio annuerunt gaudentes rure Camenae.

<sup>2</sup> W. Y. Sellar, *Virgil*.

<sup>3</sup> —hic inter flumina nota  
et fontis sacros frigus captabis opacum.

And then the happy shepherd himself invites, the friend whose fate is exile, Africa perhaps, or Scythia, or the *Briton sheerly cut off from the whole world*, to supper and sleep at his own restored home—

For now the farmhouse gables are smoking in the distance, and larger shadows fall on the lofty mountains.<sup>1</sup>

The magic of their melody in such lines, if once known, is lifelong : the *nec gemere . . .* seems to carry one straight into the heavens ; the cadence of the last, it has been truly said, is “soft almost as the falling of the shadows themselves.”<sup>2</sup> *The long summer days*, as Vergil has it, *which as a boy I saw go down while singing*,<sup>3</sup> seem to have moulded his heart and his verse with it to this exquisite depth of music and sentiment.

Quintilian, the great Latin critic, justly defines *amenity* as the quality of landscape to which his countrymen naturally turned. “Beauty lies in sea-views, in plains, in pleasant “places,”—*species maritimis, planis, amoenis*. The mountain sublimity of Alp or Apennine, as often has been noticed, rarely touched them. And so what the general mood of the *Elegies* renders is the soft sweet freshness of Italy, that *favouring heaven—caeli indulgentia*—which more northern and more southern climates cannot adequately give or compensate. Thus he shows how the Spring comes on in the happy land—

Then wild copses resound with the music of the birds . . . and at the warm breath of the Zephyrs the fields open their bosoms, gentle moisture lies thick over all ; and the birds venture to trust themselves in safety to suns unfelt before.<sup>4</sup>

hinc tibi, quae semper, vicino ab limite saepes  
Hyblaeis apibus florem depasta salicti  
saepe levì somnum suadet inire susurro ;  
hinc alta sub rupe canet frondator ad auras :  
nec tamen interea raucae, tua cura, palumbes  
nec gemere aëria cessabit turtur ab ulmo.

*Ecl. i, 51.*

<sup>1</sup> et iam summa procul villarum culmina fumant,  
maioresque cadunt altis de montibus umbrae.

*Ecl. i, 82.*

<sup>2</sup> P. G. Hamerton, *Landscape*, 1885.

<sup>3</sup> —saepe ego longos  
cantando puerum memini me condere soles. *Ecl. ix, 51.*

<sup>4</sup> avia tum resonant avibus virgulta canoris . . .  
parturit almus ager, Zephyrique tepentibus auris

In this style, once more, is an invitation to the Sea-nymph who is the shepherd's love—

O hither come, Galatea ; for what delight is there in the sea ?  
Here is the glowing Spring, here on the river-sides the earth pours forth her varied flowers, here the pale poplar overhangs the cavern, and the tough vines weave their shading bower :—  
Hither come : let the mad waves beat the shore at their pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

He gives us also a little vignette landscape, naming a series of the natural scenes which most charmed him—

Thy song [says one shepherd to another] delights me more than the cry of the coming south-west wind, the sea beach smitten by the wave, the rivers running down through rocky valleys.<sup>2</sup>

This comparative temper seems to differ from the Greek ; it is more modern. And Vergil here and there appears to throw himself with pensive emotion into the love of wild Nature for her own sake ; unlike the gloom and terror with which it inspired Lucretius, solitude has a charm for him, a personal passion ; the love-lorn Corydon, we hear, *would pour forth his vain yearning in unpremeditated words to the woods and the mountains, alone.*<sup>3</sup>

The human figures in the *Elegies* are less distinct and prominent than in Theocritus and the *Epigrams* ; they seem to lose themselves in Nature. This treatment is remote from the social, the simply human temperament of the Greeks ; perhaps, as Sellar remarks, we may here again reasonably trace the romantic, the Celtic influence of Vergil's blood and his

laxant arva sinus ; superat tener omnibus umor ;  
inque novos soles audent se germina tuto  
credere.

*Georg.* ii, 328.

<sup>1</sup> *huc ades, o Galatea ; quis est nam ludus in undis ?*  
*hic ver purpureum, varios hic flumina circum*  
*fundit humus flores, hic candida populus antro*  
*imminet et lentae texunt umbracula vites ;*  
*hue ades ; insani feriant sine litora fluctus.*

*Ecl.* ix, 39.

<sup>2</sup> *nam neque me tantum venientis sibilus austri*  
*nec percussa iuvant fluctu tam litora, nec quae*  
*saxosas inter decurrent flumina valles.*

*Ecl.* v, 82.

<sup>3</sup> *—haec incondita solus*  
*montibus et silvis studio iactabat inani.*

early associations. Yet here and there he curiously seems to recognise this love for pure Nature as a sentimentalism, a something not quite worthy Roman manhood. Such a feeling may underlie the phrase how *in his youth his Muse did not blush to dwell in the woods*; or that his friend Gallus *need not be ashamed of his bucolic verse*. Or, again, we have the impassioned cry to the Muses, *sweet before all sweetness* to him, *dulces ante omnia*, that if he could not rival Lucretius in scientific knowledge of the universe, then

May the countryside and the racing streamlets in the valleys  
delight me: let me be in love with rivers and woods, and give  
up glory.<sup>1</sup>

Passing now to Vergil's later, longer, more important poems, the *Georgica* (from which I have just quoted) bear us to another atmosphere. Here Vergil had a distinct ethical object—an inspiring patriotic aim. He wished to hold up to his Roman countrymen the excellence and the charm of their old simpler, homelier life, to renew the *Coloni* of Italy, to turn the peace of the Empire to better use than fostering the luxury of the capital. The *Elegies*, we may say, he wrote for his own delight, for the pure love of song, careless of any direct purpose; the soul of the rose has gone into his blood; there is a luxurious sweetness in his hexameter; his mood was that which Shakespeare has touched in two exquisite lines—

The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,  
Though to itself it only live and die.

And in this romantic sentiment he perhaps unconsciously preluded to that curious school of Roman poetry which we shall meet with some two centuries later.

The more serious purpose of the *Georgics* has lent to their landscape a greater detail in facts, a more realistic character. In the *Elegies* it has been remarked how seldom the actively imaginative use of words is found, like that *dumosa pendere . . . de rupe* applied to the kids, hanging from the briary rock,

<sup>1</sup> rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallis amnes,  
flumina amem silvasque inglorius.

*Georg.* II, 485.

quoted by Wordsworth. The epithets given to trees, flowers, or animals seem now more distinctive ; they are often geographical, partly, doubtless, from that delightful inherent suggestiveness of names remote in place or famous in song, which other poets also have felt, partly to aid the reader in realising the scene. Other frequent epithets, as *happy*, *joyful*, and their contraries, imply a kind of personal life underlying Nature. These are indeed the natural expression of the sensitive heart or observant mind in all ages ; from Lucretius to our own day the most merely materialistic Science has found it impossible to describe natural details without recourse to metaphors which are at variance with her own assumptions.

More than elsewhere, Vergil, in the *Georgics*, appears as a naturalist. Here he doubtless was indebted for much to the erudite but generally prosaic verse-writers of Alexandria—Aratus or Nicander. No poet, I think, unless we except Tennyson, our Vergil, has united learning, at once so much and so varied, with such consummate art, has so completely absorbed and then created afresh his material. But Vergil also constantly shows with what affectionate care he had studied Italian country scenes and life from Lombardy to Sicily. Above all, perhaps, his knowledge of trees is marked ; a charming memory from childhood, if we recall that his father was a farmer and a wood-merchant: whence Vergil has been described to us in antiquity as “a Venetian [Lombard] . . . reared in ‘a rough woodland country.’”<sup>1</sup> The child was truly father to the man, rather, never died out in him.

How does Vergil lift his endless particulars of rural life, his Farmer’s Guide, a subject purely didactic, into one of the very most exquisite poems in all literature ? He tells us himself : *singula . . . capti circumvectamur amore—charmed with the love of it, we linger around every detail.* His success came primarily and essentially through his own personal enthusiasm for woods and rivers, for the common sights of the country, for the landscape loved in childhood, associating them constantly with human relations, finding and revealing everywhere the beautiful in each. Yet the all-pervading sensibility which

<sup>1</sup> Macrobius v, 2 ; quoted by Sellar.

colours his verse, the sweet persuasiveness of style, the unerring eye, very rarely lead him to direct landscape description : he cannot break through the classical law of reserve. Hence it is hard to offer examples of Vergil's skill ; in Juvenal's phrase, "I cannot display it, I only feel it." Perhaps when he breaks out into the passionate praise of Italy—loved by him not less than England by Wordsworth "as a lover or a child"—his pictorial power is seen at its best. After an admirable review of the forest scenery of the world known to him, he bursts forth exultingly with the cry how neither Media nor India nor fabled Arabia can vie with Italy—

Here is constant spring and summer in months other than its own : here trees bear a double harvest. . . . Add the noble cities of Italy, how many ; how many towns piled up by man upon the steep crags, and rivers flowing beneath ancient walls. Should I not speak of the sea of Adria, and the Tuscan ? Or of those mighty lakes, Como greatest, and Garda heaving with the very billows and the roar of ocean.<sup>1</sup>

The charm of these lines vanishes indeed, in my meagre prose, as a flower vanishes in a red-hot crucible, to take Shelley's fine phrase upon the translation of poetry ; but their magic has survived, through all the centuries :—as we see when Tennyson sings how he was haunted by the music of

The rich Virgilian rustic measure  
Of Lari Maxume . . .

just as the exquisite song to his lost brother by Catullus, he,—  
the

Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen hundred years ago,

<sup>1</sup> hic ver adsiduum atque alienis mensibus aestas :  
bis gravidae pecudes, bis pomis utilis arbos. . . .  
adde tot egregias urbes operumque laborem,  
tot congesta manu praeruptis oppida saxis  
fluminaque antiquos subterlabentia muros.  
an mare quod supra memorem, quodque adluit infra ?  
anne lacus tantos ? te, Lari maxime, teque,  
fluctibus et fremitu adsurgens Benace marino ?—*Georg.* II, 149.

moved our poet to the lovely lines on Catullus' home at Sirmio on Garda—

Row us out from Desenzano, to your Sirmione row.

And here I may fitly quote four more verses from Vergil upon the gathering of a storm—

Forthwith, as the winds rise, the inlets of the sea begin to swell as they move, and a dry crashing is heard upon the lofty mountains, and the shores are confusedly resounding from afar, and the murmur of the woods grows deeper.

Now for the poet himself<sup>1</sup>—

continuo ventis surgentibus aut freta ponti  
incipiunt agitata tumescere et aridus altis  
montibus audiri fragor, aut resonantia longe  
litora miseri et nemorum increbrescere murmur.

I quote these lines, remembering how Tennyson would read them to me in the days that are no more, saying that from the magnificent music of the Vergilian hexameter, as here exemplified, he believed Milton caught (or recognised) his own splendid blank verse movement in the *Paradise*.

To sum up this imperfect criticism, whilst Lucretius scientifically interrogates Nature, Vergil, though longing to investigate, embraces her. Lucretius was sensitive to landscape in its vastness, Horace (as we shall presently see) in its home scenes : Vergil unites both aspects.

The *Aeneid* may be briefly dismissed. Natural description can have but little place in an epic. That of Vergil, when brought in as background to the human figures, is treated with his usual art, but cannot be parted from his story. When he employs nature in the way of simile, whilst imitating Homer, he often falls below him. But he has introduced two bright pictures from insect life : the bees whose toil is compared with that of the builders from Carthage, and the ants as they store grain for winter.

Briefer notice must suffice for the remaining Latin singers

<sup>1</sup> *Georg.* I, 356.

of the Augustan age. Lyrical poetry until modern days has not been fertile in landscape. Yet, to revert to the earlier period, Catullus (*c.* 87—*c.* 54 B.C.), beside that lovely *Return to Sirmio* which inspired Tennyson's lines already alluded to, and which may be said to unite perfect human feeling with perfect painting of nature, in an idyll has left us one admirable sea-piece, worthy of Venetian art in its brilliant colouring—

Zephyr with morning breath ruffling the calm sea drives the waves into slanting slopes, as dawn uprises to the threshold of the roving sun ; smitten at first with gentle stroke, the waves slowly move onward, ripple and laugh as they softly splash ; then as the gust increases, they too more and more come thicker one upon another, and as they sail far off reflect a brightness from the glowing light.<sup>1</sup>

The poetical gifts in which Catullus has found few rivals may be felt here ; the exquisitely vivid pictorial treatment, the fresh first-hand rendering of the scene, the sincerity of vision, the seemingly effortless power.

Horace (65–8 B.C.), with an art even more perfect, does not always command this simplicity, this poetry of the “first ‘intention.’” His was truly a felicity of phrase, resting on supreme painstaking — *curiosa*, — and with it, an undying charm, and a command over his readers, from century to century, not otherwise attainable. Horace, also, *more maiorum*, paints for us but few landscapes. Yet this was from no want of due love—far from it ; it was his feeling, not less than Vergil's, that country life was essential to true poetical work. He has not Vergil's sympathy with Nature in her manifold life, nor with Lucretius in her gloom and magnificence. It is the landscape—largely yet not exclusively the landscape of cultivation—endeared to his heart of hearts by intimacy and

<sup>1</sup> —flatu placidum mare matutino  
horrificans Zephyrus proclivas incitat undas,  
Aurora ex oriente vagi sub limina Solis ;  
quae tarde primum clementi flamine pulsae  
procedunt,—leni resonant plangore cachinni,—  
post vento crescente magis magis increbrescant  
purpureaque procul nantes a luce refulgent.

*Epithal. Pel. et Thet.* 269.

by possession, the natural pride of the freehold, that rule him. To the peace and beauty of the *streams that flow by fruitful Tivoli, and the thick foliage of the groves*, it is that he ascribes his *distinction in Aeolian song*.<sup>1</sup> That love of Nature which is one of the greatest charms of his art may be said to be the condition of its existence.<sup>2</sup>

Horace condenses into one phrase the features of a whole landscape, as *Autumn raising his head over the fields, adorned with mellow apples*,<sup>3</sup> or how *a stream of pure water and a grove of a few acres and my never-disappointing harvest*,<sup>4</sup> are enough for his happiness. *Why choose wearisome wealth in exchange for my Sabine Valley?*<sup>5</sup> So again of his beloved Tivoli : *Founded by an Argive colony*, he says, with a poet's feeling for the romance of antiquity, *I pray this may be the abode of my old age ; the last home for one tired of voyage and road and soldiership . . . That corner of the world smiles to me beyond all others, where the honey equals Hymettus and the olive Venafrum with its greenery, where Jove grants a long Spring and mild Winter, and Mount Aulon, friendly to the fertile vine, has no reason to envy the grapes of Falernum.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> —que Tibur aquae fertile praefluunt,  
et spissae nemorum comae  
fingent Aeolio carmine nobilem.

<sup>2</sup> W. Y. Sellar, *Horace and the Elegiac Poets* (1892).

<sup>3</sup> cum decorum mitibus pomis caput  
Auctumnus agris extulit.

<sup>4</sup> purae rivus aquae silvaque iugerum  
paucorum, et segetis certa fides meae.

<sup>5</sup> cur valle permutem Sabina  
divitias operosiores ?

What an indescribable charm and fineness of touch has Horace put into these phrases ! Those who cannot find the great poet in him should lay aside poetry ; in Sappho's words, *they have no share in the roses of Pieria*.

<sup>6</sup> Tibur Argeo positum colono  
sit meae sedes utinam senectae,  
sit modus lasso maris et viarum  
militiaeque.

ille terrarum mihi praeter omnis  
angulus ridet, ubi non Hymetto  
mella decedunt viridique certat  
baca Venafro ;

I give the bare words ; but the magical choice of each, the skill and beauty and music of the metre, the bloom and consecration of poetry, only the "happiness" of this great artist can render.

Often as the elegiac poets, Tibullus (*c.* 54–*c.* 18 B.C.), Propertius (*c.* 51–16 B.C.), Ovid (43 B.C.–18 A.D.), naturally deal with the country, their distinct landscape painting is rare and apt to run upon commonplace. Tibullus has indeed much amenity ; his delight, as Horace said of him, was "to "stray in silence through the healthy woodland." But not less was his pleasure in trim garden and vineyard, united with cottagers and the peaceful life of the farm, and the thought of Delia the beloved underlying all.

In marked contrast with Tibullus and the poets of his period is the gloomy and powerful Propertius. The devouring passion of his life for a faithless woman seems to colour his whole mind. The fair landscape affords him no comfort or refuge ; he flies to the desert, but only to pour forth his tears for Cynthia, not, like Lucretius, to adore Nature in her wild magnificence. He also dwells much after the common fashion of the ancients on the terrors and fury of the sea, as encountered in their clumsy vessels, and no compass to guide them. His was a great gift misused ; Propertius, whether in his own life or poetry, failed to beat out his harmony ; although, had his years been prolonged, the noble Elegy on Cornelia which concludes the book shows that he might have come not far below the peculiar Roman gravity and grandeur of Lucretius or Tacitus.

Ovid, amongst world-famous poets, perhaps the least true to the soul of poetry, has left us landscape description indeed, but commonly so artificialised that it recalls only the mannered and now lifeless mythological fashions of the later Italian Renaissance. It was "the beauty of colour rather than of "form," Sellar notes, "that Ovid recognises." Exuberant as

ver ubi longum tepidasque praebet  
Iuppiter brumas et amicus Aulon  
fertili Baccho minimum Falernis  
invidet uvis.

*Od.* II, vi, 5.

was his fancy, the sensuous loveliness of Nature, wholly apart from its inner charm for mind or heart, was all that he could feel or reproduce. Even in the first book of the *Metamorphoses* —of all over-praised poems, it seems to me, over-praised the most<sup>1</sup>—the romantic events of the new created world cannot lift him into any phrase of true feeling or picturesqueness. Even when Proserpina herself is seen gathering flowers with her comrade girls in Enna, nothing but a gardener's catalogue presents itself to Ovid's prosaic ingenuity; and Guido's one deeply inspired work, the justly famous Rospigliosi *Aurora*, owes nothing of its poetry to the verses which are supposed to have been the painter's text.

<sup>1</sup> As poetry, that is. Ovid's immense profluence of varied tales, the magazine for Italian painters and sculptors during some two centuries, with his *Amores*, was what gave the poet his now faded supremacy.

## CHAPTER V

### *LANDSCAPE IN LATER ROMAN EPIC AND THE ELOCUTIO NOVELLA*

THE Augustan age, after flourishing, like our Elizabethan, for about sixty years, dwindled after Ovid's death (18 A.D.), though prolonged till Nero's time, the middle of the first century. The latter half of this may be named from the imperial family, the Flavian period, and is often called the Silver Age ; the most noteworthy poets here being Statius, Silius Italicus, and Martial. This last lively worldly poet—the earliest Roman known to us who made literature his profession and his livelihood (not without that degradation of writer, book, and reader, which too often follows)—yields nothing for our purpose ; although his poem on the Baian Villa of a friend supplied hints to Ben Jonson in his *Penshurst*, and to Herrick in his beautiful *Sweet Country Life*.

Statius has left his vast *Thebaid*, founded upon Vergil and published about 92 A.D. Although not an inspired work, this has much scattered merit in “graphic and picturesque “touches,”<sup>1</sup> and often shows true poetical feeling. I will quote from one of the minor poems a visit which he paid to the villa of his friend Vopiscus at Tivoli—

O day to be long remembered : . . . how gracious the natural quality of the soil ! What disposition given by art of hand to the happy place ! Nowhere has Nature delighted herself more liberally. Lofty woodlands overhang the rapid current ; an

<sup>1</sup> J. Conington (*Essays*, 1872) ; who characterises the poets of this period as having point and terseness, but deficient in simplicity and repose.

answering deceptive image is often given back to the foliage, and one stream runs through a length of shadow.<sup>1</sup>

Very inferior is the immense Epic of Silius, longer than the *Odyssey*, upon the Punic War. Mackail describes him as an "incorrigible amateur," and the poem is indeed but a pedant's copy of the traditional commonplaces of the ancient epic. Yet I can give one quotation from a beautifully written simile with which he surprises us, when describing the weariness of Hannibal's troops at the monotonous glare of the snow and ice upon the summit of an Alpine pass—

As a sailor in mid ocean, when he has left afar the sweet firm land, and the empty sails find no breezes, and the mast is steadfast, looks out upon the measureless sea, and overcome by the watery depths, wearied, refreshes his eyes upon the open heavens.<sup>2</sup>

What we commonly think of as Latin literature now rapidly nears its extinction. Under Hadrian's principate (138–161 A.D.) the Silver Age was followed by a period when Greek was familiarly adopted as their language by Latin writers, whilst, at the same time, a new school appeared which, under the name of *Elocutio Novella*, created a style strangely diverse both in sentiment and in diction from the preceding classical Latin.

These changes, as Mackail points out, in each case had a traceable cause. Classical Latin, with its unique gift of weighty splendour, we should always recollect, was, in truth, a

<sup>1</sup> o longum memoranda dies! . . .  
ingenium quam mite solo! quae forma beatis  
arte manus concessa locis! non largius usquam  
indulsit Natura sibi; nemora alta citatis  
incubuere vadis; fallax responsat imago  
frondibus, et longas eadem fugit unda per umbras.

Statius, *Sylv.* I, iii, 13.

<sup>2</sup> —medio sic navita ponto  
cum dulces liquit terras, et inania nullos  
inveniunt ventos seculo carbasa malo,  
immensas prospectat aquas, ac, victa profundis  
aequoribus, fessus renovat sua lumina caelo.

*Punica* III, 535.

highly artificial language, gradually formed and polished by suffusion of Greek influence. The stages of the literature, to review them roughly, are from Ennius about 200 B.C. to Lucretius about 50 B.C., after which comes the supreme Augustan age, say to 20 A.D. The invigorating freshness of Greek culture had then done its work and was exhausted, whence the long period of decline begins. During this time also, the peace of the early Empire had broken up, and literature found no longer powerful patrons as of old, whilst the classical dialect had parted widely from that in common use. Hence the natural direction to Greek literature on one hand, on the other the attempt to create a new mode of speech.<sup>1</sup>

This *Elocutio Novella*, beginning apparently with the prose writers, Fronto and Appuleius—both African by birth—and both living towards the close of the second century, represented “not merely a fresh refinement in the artificial management of thought and language, but the appearance on the ‘surface of certain native qualities in Latin,’ latent but long suppressed by the Graeco-Roman fashion; although, meanwhile, that style itself was developing into a subtlety, an analytic and subjective manner, in the hands of Pliny the younger and Tacitus.<sup>2</sup> Quintilian had gone back to Cicero’s language;

<sup>1</sup> Mommsen, in his admirable work on the *Provinces of the Empire* (Bk. VIII, chap. xiii), speaking of the first Latin versions of the Bible, remarks that these translations were made, not into “the language of the cultivated circles of the ‘West, which early disappeared from common life, and in the imperial age ‘was everywhere a matter of scholastic attainment, but into the decomposed ‘Latin already preparing the way for the structure of the Romance languages—‘the Latin of common intercourse at that time familiar to the great masses.’” But of the African style of Fronto and Appuleius and that circle he speaks with great contempt, seemingly treating it as a degenerate language which has fallen away from “the earnest austerity innate in Latin,” strange and incongruous, with “its diffuseness of petty detail”; whence this “whole field of ‘Africano-Latin authorship’ does not offer ‘a single poet who deserves to be ‘so much as named.’” With the highest respect for this great historian, I would venture to add that in this perhaps somewhat too academical judgment Mommsen passes over the interest—sometimes the charm—of that quasi-romanticism traceable in the style in question, with all its weaker side.

<sup>2</sup> Whether in sentiment or in style Tacitus is so strangely unlike his predecessors, has an appeal so direct to modern thought, that the theory once put forward assigning his historical work to a mediaeval forger—although even more absurd, if possible, than that theory which assigns Shakespeare’s Drama to Lord Verulam—has a certain *prima facie* probability. Yet, in fact, the

Fronto and Appuleius aimed at uniting elements in the Latin of the second century B.C. and in the popular diction of their own day, with a romantic, highly coloured style, which we, looking back over the Middle Ages, are disposed (though figuratively rather than with strict accuracy) to call mediaeval. Perhaps also, I would conjecture, something of the graceful direct conversational manner possible in Greek literature, together with the tender sentiment of its later stages, such as the Epigrams show, came in through the Greek impulse, already noticed, of the period before us.

I have dwelt at some length on this subject, partly as so curious in itself, and yet so often slurred over by our literary historians, partly because its effect on landscape poetry is especially perceptible.<sup>1</sup> We have, indeed, these *poetae novelli*, as the Grammarians call them, in scattered fragments, the dates uncertain, the texts corrupt. And we are ignorant how numerous may have been the writers who worked in this new style,—classical literature everywhere reflecting the gaps and imperfections of the “geological record”;—and the movement apparently ended early in the fourth century at the advent of Christian verse, with its new ideas, new diction, new colour; whilst the old classical manner, as we shall see, meanwhile survived, though in a feeble imitative condition.

Turning now to the *Elocutio Novella* itself in still extant literature, we may note that with Appuleius, especially in his beautiful Cupid and Psyché romance, his prose approaches in manner what is known as assonant verse. Probably to the middle of the second century A.D. may be assigned the singular fragmentary *Vigil of Venus*, written in long trochaics—a reversion to very early Latin usage—but here so treated that accent tends to coincide with quantity. The song opens thus—

To-morrow let him love who has never loved yet, and he who  
has loved let him love to-morrow.

very peculiarities which suggest this idea, looked at closely, are its absolute refutation.

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller statement readers are referred to Mr. Mackail's *Latin Literature*, to which I am here deeply indebted.

(A line which, employed in true romantic fashion as a refrain, recurs throughout.)

Spring is fresh, Spring now is musical, Spring is the world born again ;  
 In spring lovers agree, in spring the birds wed,  
 And the wood lets loose its tresses as it is married by the showers.  
 To-morrow let him love who has never loved yet, and he who has loved let him love to-morrow.

Then the rose, that typical flower of love, in romance, appears—

Formed of the blood of Venus, and the kiss of Amor,  
 And of gems and of flames, and the crimson which the sun brings out :  
 To-morrow she, her virgin zone once loosed, will not blush to unveil  
 The ruby which lay within her outer robe of fire.

But the text is here so uncertain that only the scattered hints of the poet are discernible. It is with a love-sigh that the song ends—

The bird sings, we are silent : when will my spring come?<sup>1</sup>

We who have mediaevalism to look back upon can hardly help finding in these lines an anticipation of later sentiment. And this is true in some sense. How deeply the passion shown here and the style differ from the tone of the

<sup>1</sup> *cras amet qui nunquam amavit, quique amavit cras amet ; ver novum, ver iam canorum, ver renatus orbis est ; vere concordant amores, vere nubunt alites et nemus comam resolvit de maritis imbris ; cras amet qui nunquam amavit, quique amavit cras amet.*

*facta Cypridis de cruore deque Amoris osculo  
 deque gemmis deque flammis deque solis purpuris,  
 cras ruborem qui latebat veste tectus ignea  
 unico marita nodo non pudebit solvere.*

*illa cantat, nos tacemus : quando ver venit meum ?*

*unico : the unico gaudens mulier marito* of Horace (*Od. III, xiv*) seems here to have been in the poet's mind.

Augustan poetry is obvious ! Full as the song is of feeling, it is not the unique feeling of Vergil, nor has it, of course, the breadth, the great manner of his poetry. Beside the Greek influence which we have noted there is here also something of an Asiatic exuberance. The elements of romance, in fact, doubtless lie deep in human nature, and under the changing circumstances of life, among the civilised communities of our hemisphere from their earliest date, come to the surface, as it were, bloom into poetry and fade, each in their due season. If, therefore, we here use the term mediaevalism, I understand it rather as an explanatory expression than as necessarily implying that this school of Roman poetry had any direct influence upon the remote future.<sup>1</sup>

An epigram, not of early date, belongs to the same *cultus* of the Rose as the *Pervigilium Veneris* has presented ; a flower under which, in the eternal drama of Love, poetry at all times has delighted to figure Beauty. Here, also, we have the modern accent—more perceptible, perhaps, from the familiar repetition of the motive in English verse—

O what roses have I seen come forth at morning ! They were still coming to birth, not all of one age. The first was [only] putting forth her budding clusters : The next was lifting the crimson points from the now perfect bud : Not yet had the third displayed the whole circle of the calyx : The fourth now shone out all together, the flower had changed her covering. Meanwhile one lifts her head, a second unwinds her zone, the maiden blush of another is half-hidden by her robe :—Gather roses early, lest they die ! How soon a maid withers !<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Early Arabian poetry, perhaps early Indian, judged by translation, offers a sentiment in regard to love as personal passion, perhaps also in regard to Nature, which seems to me to support the view I have here ventured to offer.

<sup>2</sup> o quales ego mane rosas procedere vidi !  
nascebantur adhuc, neque erat par omnibus aetas.  
prima papillatos ducebat [tecta] corymbos ;  
altera puniceos apices umbone levabat ;  
tertia non totum calathii patefecerat orbem,  
quarta simul nituit, mutato tegmine floris.  
dum levat una caput, dumque explicat altera nodum,  
huic dum virgineus pudor extenuatur amictu :—  
ne pereant, lege mane rosas ! cito virgo senescit.

*Latin Anthology*, no. 1020 (Meyer, 1835).

This may not be exactly landscape ; but under cover of the *Pervigilium* I have allowed myself the pleasure of admitting it.

The four *Bucolica*, recognised by J. Conington as the work of Nemesianus of Carthage (close of third century), echoing Vergil, have something of his grace ; but the style and thoughts are marked by a curious simplicity, found at times in later Latin poets. The shepherds (though our specimen does not exhibit this feature) offer love with a directness alien from the Master's delicacy.

A brief specimen, with a pretty refrain, may suffice. Mopsus invokes his cruel love Moroë—

Hither, O fair Moroë ! come ! summer calls thee to the shade ; already have the flocks moved beneath the wood, now no bird sings with its vocal throat, the scaly snake does not mark the ground with her winding track. Alone I sing, the whole wood speaks of me, nor do I yield in song to the cicadas of summer. *Let each sing his love : songs also lighten pain.*<sup>1</sup>

Yet Nemesianus also shows some sign of participating in the romantic movement, as a passage quoted by Mr. Mackail proves. It is, indeed, but “a little touch” of the modern tone, “partly ‘imitated from Virgil, but partly natural to the new Latin.’”

The rosebush loses the rose, nor are the lilies alway snow-bright, nor does the vine long retain her leafy tresses, nor the poplar its shade : Beauty is a brief gift, nor can make itself at home in age.<sup>2</sup>

Tiberianus, Count of Africa in 326 A.D., and holder of other high offices, continues the *Elocutio Novella* even into the fourth century, although with less affectation or artifice of

<sup>1</sup> huc, Moroë formosa, veni ; vocat aestus in umbram ;  
iam pecudes subiere nemus ; iam nulla canoro  
gutture cantat avis, torto non squamea tractu  
signat humum serpens. solus cano : me sonat omnis  
silva, nec aestivis cantu concedo cicadis.  
*cantet, amet quod quisque : levant et carmina curas.*

*Buc. IV, 38.*

<sup>2</sup> perdit spina rosas nec semper lilia carent,  
nec longum tenet uva comas nec populus umbras ;  
donum forma breve est, nec se quod commodet annis.

diction, and also with less metrical accuracy. The old laborious rules of Latin verse imported from the Greek were now rapidly breaking down—a change which was doubtless popularised by the Christian hymns and poetry freely produced after the conversion of Constantine. The little fragment by Tiberianus supplies one of the most detailed, of the completest landscape descriptions known to me in Latin poetry. I owe my copy of it to Mr. Mackail, who states that the single known text “is corrupt and badly spelled, so that one cannot be at all ‘sure of the reading in several lines.’”

The stream was moving through herbage as it poured down a chill valley, smiling with brilliant pebbles, coloured with the flowers of the meadow. Overhead a breeze softly stirred the dark green laurel and myrtle thickets with a caressing rustle. But beneath, soft grass was dense with sweet flowers, the lawn was reddened by crocus and glittering with lilies, while the whole grove was sweet with the breath of violets. Among those gifts of spring, jewelled beauties,—Queen of all odours and leader among the splendid hues, with her golden blossom—the Rose, Dioné’s flower, stood forth eminent. The grove was crisp with dew throughout its moist herbage; here and there murmured rivulets from an abundant source. Moss and flourishing [ivy] within garlanded the caves, where the oozing streams ran in shining drops.

Among these shades every bird, more tuneful than one could believe, sounded songs of spring and sweet chuckling laughter: Here the murmur of the babbling stream sang in concert with the leaves, stirred by the melody of the vocal breeze, the music of the western wind. Thus any one who went by the green spaces, fair, odorous, songful,—bird, stream, breeze, grove, flower, and shade delighted him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> amnis ibat inter herbas valle fusus frigida,  
luce ridens calcitorum, flore pictus herbido.  
caerulas superne laurus et virecta myrtea  
leniter motabat aura blandiente sibilo.  
subter autem molle gramen flore dulci creverat  
et croco solum rubebat et lucebat liliis;  
tum nemus fragrabat omne violarum spiritu.  
inter ista dona veris gemmeasque gratias  
omnium regina odorum et colorum lucifer

There is a strange charm in this picture, free as it is from mythological intrusion, careless in rhythm and order, missal-like in its simple contrasted colours. Although Tasso can hardly have seen it, the symphony of Nature contained in the last lines "consorting" with the human visiter—perhaps supposed a lover—is singularly like the song in Armida's wood,<sup>1</sup> with its "melodies unheard," sweeter than vocal; or, again, with that Garden of Acrasia (as noted by Mackail), in which Spenser, whilst following, almost rivals the Italian himself—

All that pleasing is to living ear  
Was there consorted in one harmony;  
Birds, voices, instruments, winds, waters, all agree :

The joyous birds, shrouded in cheerful shade,  
Their notes unto the voice attemper'd sweet :  
The angelical soft trembling voices made  
To the instruments divine respondence meet ;  
The silver-sounding instruments did meet  
With the base murmur of the waters' fall ;  
The waters' fall with difference discreet,  
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call ;  
The gentle warbling wind low answeréd to all.

But what a wide and striking difference is there between the fairy woodland of Tiberianus and the Titanic landscape of Lucretius, full of horror and wildness—the perfect modulation, the celestial beauty, the deep, deep humanity of Vergil! With

auro<sup>a</sup> flore praeminebat flos Dionaeus rosa.  
roscidum nemus rigebat inter uda gramina ;  
fonte crebro murmurabant hinc et inde rivuli ;  
antra muscus et virentes intus [hederae<sup>b</sup>] vinixerant,  
quae<sup>c</sup> fluenta labibunda guttis ibant lucidis.  
has per umbras omnis ales plus canora quam putes  
cantibus vernis strepebat et susurris dulcibus :  
hic loquentis murmur amnis concinebat frondibus  
quas melos vocalis aurae, musa Zephyri, moverat :  
sic euntem per virecta pulchra odora et musica  
ales amnis aura lucus flos et umbra iuverat.

<sup>1</sup> *Gerusalemme*, Canto xvi, 12.

\* Probably syncopated for *aureo*.

<sup>b</sup> Conjectured : a gap here in the MS. (Harl. 3685, B.M.)

<sup>c</sup> Refers to *antra*. These notes, with other suggestions, are due to Mr. Mackail's kindness.

a true affection the later poet does indeed feel for and with Nature ; but the landscape breadth of the older style, the recognition of a Divine something in all we see, is narrowed here to the subjective delight like that which our own Marvell expressed through his lovely verses, *In a Garden*.

Here, however, my examples end. The new style seems to have been but an undercurrent ; that which we think of as the Classical resumes its appearance (though with much of the later feeling for landscape) in our next poet, Ausonius of Bordeaux. His poem on the Moselle—"the most beautiful "of purely descriptive Latin poems," says Mackail—was written about 370 A.D. at Trèves, where he was Professor of Grammar and Rhetoric. To this latter study we may perhaps ascribe some false ingenuities in the *Mosella* ; but, on the whole, "it is "unique in the felicity with which it unites Virgilian rhythm "and diction with the new romantic sense of the beauties of "nature"—nor, perhaps, is it less noteworthy as our only example of a Transalpine northern landscape.

Although a Christian in faith, Ausonius pretends to see Naiades, fauns, and satyrs celebrating their mysterious games ; these he may not tell :—

Let these secrets be hidden : let the worship, the *reverentia* entrusted to the river-side lie concealed : But that beauty [of the landscape] may be openly enjoyed, when the gray stream repeats the shady hill ; the river waters seem to burst into leaf, to be themselves planted with the vine-bough. What colour is that upon the shallows when Hesperus at evening has led forth the twilight, and pours the green mountain over the Moselle ? All the crags of the sharply outlined hills are swimming there, and the vine-spray is waving in its image, the whole vintage burgeons in the glassy waves.<sup>1</sup>

Claudian is in many ways a singular figure in Latin literature. By his short historical epics—written between 395 and

<sup>1</sup> —secreta tegatur  
et commissa suis lateat reverentia ripis. |  
illa fruenda palam species, cum glaucus opaco  
respondet colli fluvius : frondere videntur  
fluminei latices, et palmite consitus amnis.

405 A.D.—he ranks as the last of the genuinely Roman poets, being also “the last eminent man of letters who was a professed ‘pagan.’” Although bred and dwelling long in Alexandria, “his Latin,” Mackail remarks, “is as pure as that of the best ‘poets of the Silver Age’; and he was gifted also with wealth of language and fertility of imagination. But these epics are purely literary; Claudian had the complete Alexandrian culture; yet by his time that (with his religion) was “not only ‘artificial but unnatural’; his poetry might have belonged to ‘the Renaissance in its narrower aspect.’” In a word, it is impersonal, wholly wanting the subjective quality of the “new poets.” Hence one reads with disappointment the elegant description of the Vale of Henna in his *Rape of Proserpine*. Henna has indeed summoned Zephyr to prepare the spot for Proserpina and her companions; yet it is but a cold, artificial picture. We think of Shakespeare, with his—

O Proserpina,  
For the flowers now, that, frightened, thou let'st fall  
From Dis's waggon! daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,  
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,  
Or Cytherea's breath . . .

or Milton, when he sings of

That fair field  
Of Enna, where Proserpine, gathering flowers,  
Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis  
Was gather'd . . .

or his impassioned address in *Lycidas* to the *Sicilian Muse*, and the floral catalogue of *rathe primrose, pale jessamine, pansy* *freak'd with jet*, . . .

With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
And every flower that sad embroidery wears.

quis color ille vadis, seras cum protulit umbras  
Hesperus, et viridi perfundit monte Mosellam!  
tota natant crispis iuga montibus, et tremit absens  
pampinus, et vitreis vindemia turgent in undis.

Now turn to the skilful and learned Latin poet—

The beauty of the place excels the flowers : the plain curving into a slight eminence, grew into a hill by gentle slopes : fountains that sprang into the living rock, were caressing the moistened grasses with their running waters : a wood tempers with the freshness of its branches the blazing sun, and claims for itself a winter in mid-summer.<sup>1</sup>

Then follow the flowers—

The pride of the meadows is despoiled : one goddess inweaves lilies with dusky violets : soft marjoram adorns another : one moves brilliant with roses ; another is white with privet. Thee too, Hyacinth, lamenting with thy inscribed sorrows, and Narcissus, do they gather. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The description then passes off into mere display of learning and mythology. Nor does Proserpine drop her flowers when carried off to the under world. It is Vergil, without his vital charm, without his magic. Will it not be enough simply to compare with Claudian's these lines ?—

Hither, fair boy ! Lo, for thee the Nymphs bring lilies in heaped-up baskets ; For thee the fair Nais, gathering the pale yellow violet and the poppy blossom, joins them to narcissus and the flower of aromatic fennel : then, interweaving casia and other odorous plants, picks out the dark hyacinth with the golden marigold.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> forma loci superat flores ; curvata tumore  
parvo planities, et mollibus edita clivis  
creverat in collem ; vivo de pumice fontes  
roscida mobilibus lambebant gramina rivis ;  
silvaeque torrentes ramorum frigore soles  
temperat, et medio brumam sibi vindicat aestu.

*Rapt. Pros. II, 101.*

<sup>2</sup> pratorum spoliatur honos : haec lilia fuscis  
intexit violis ; hanc mollis amaracus ornat :  
haec graditur stellata rosis ; haec alba ligustris.  
te quoque fiebilibus moerens, Hyacinthe, figuris,  
Narcissumque metunt.

*Rapt. Pros. II, 128.*

<sup>3</sup> hoc ades, o formose puer ; tibi lilia plenis  
ecce ferunt nymphae calathis ; tibi candida Nais,  
pallentis violas et summa papavera carpens,

To conclude. "It is interesting to note how the rising tide of romanticism has here, as elsewhere, left Claudian wholly untouched. The passage, though elaborately ornate, is executed in the clear, hard manner of the Alexandrian school; it has not a trace of that sensitiveness to Nature which vibrates in the *Pervigilium Veneris*."<sup>1</sup>

Rutilius Namatianus, a southern Gaul, in the (imperfectly preserved) narrative of a voyage from Rome (416 A.D.) to his native land, describes his voyage along the Italian coast, with little attempt, indeed, at poetical handling, but in a simple naturalistic vein; it is truly an *Itinerary* in our sense. The coast-line is briefly sketched with clear, plain language; the ruins of Cosa, the Pharos of Populonia, the harbour of Pisa, the Corsican mountains. And touches, brief but true, of Nature are scattered. Such glimpses may be—

Dewy twilight shone in the purple red sky :  
The calm sea smiles under the tremulous sun-rays.<sup>2</sup>

But two slight pictures from the voyage will give a fuller notion of this interesting poem. The first is a twilight scene—

As rest for the night we take up our quarters on the sea sand.  
A myrtle thicket supplies our evening fire : we build little tents supported by the oars ; the quant thrown across formed an ex-temporary roof-tree.<sup>3</sup>

The journey is afterwards resumed—

We now urge on the course by sail, as the North wind had shifted when first the Morning Star shone forth on his rosy

narcissum et florem iungit bene olentis anethi,  
tum, casia atque aliis intexens suavibus herbis,  
mollia luteola pingit vaccinia caltha.

*Buc.* II, 45.

<sup>1</sup> W. J. Mackail, *Latin Literature*.

<sup>2</sup> roscida puniceo fulsere crepuscula caelo.

arridet placidum radiis crispantibus aequor.

<sup>3</sup> litorea noctis requiem metamur arena :

dat vespertinos myrtea silva focos :

parvula subiectis facimus tentoria remis,

transversus subito culmine contus erat.

steed : Corsica now begins to show her dark mountains, the dark shadow giving added height to the cloudy summit.<sup>1</sup>

Namatianus is last in this long series of classical poets who in diverse ways have given us the ancient impressions of landscape. The little collection which I have here offered, from its subject, we might almost literally call a Greek and Roman *Anthology*. The mere list of names might summon up before us a gallery of splendour, as if we enumerated the great landscape painters from Titian to Turner—Homer, Sappho, Pindar, Sophocles, Theocritus, Lucretius, Catullus, Vergil, Horace. Quitting this fascinating region—as at least the writer finds it—we see some prevision, faint yet clear, of later days. Yet near a thousand years were destined to pass—years covering the destruction of the Western Roman Empire by Northern tribes, the darkness, the pale twilight following, the gradual emergence of the first, the early or cosmopolitan Renaissance—till the new world of Christian literary civilisation breaks forth in full magnificent splendour with Dante ;—that first poet of imperial stature to whom, since Vergil, Europe had given birth.

<sup>1</sup> currere curramus velis, aquilone reverso ;  
cum primum roseo fulsit Eous equo :  
incipit obscuros ostendere Corsica montes,  
nubiferumque caput concolor umbra levat.

*Itinerarium*, II, 345, 429.

## CHAPTER VI

### *LANDSCAPE IN THE HEBREW POETRY*

THUS far the landscape, as seen in the Greek and Roman poetry, has been before us. It is a scarcely disputable commonplace to add, that these two great literatures have been eminently the most powerful models in moulding modern verse ; they form, in fact, the magnificent inevitable ante-room, the Propylaea, to the story of European song, of English more emphatically. Yet though the subject be trite, a few words may be added in explanation, so far as I am able, of the precise grounds upon which this high place is claimed.

It is a familiar, though often ignored canon, that perfect poetry demands a perfect equipoise, a perfect equivalence, between subject and treatment, matter and form ;—and that the art must be the more absolute the higher the theme chosen : whilst we have at once to confess that imperfection attends all human attempts at the perfect. It is in the region of form and treatment that the largest debt of Modern poetry probably lies to Classical ; to Hellas we all owe the eternal models of diction, of metre, in short, of style : and, hardly less important, the separation of poetry under definite forms ; the eternal models, also, of clearness and of sanity, of unity and climax in the whole. Rome, receiving this splendid inheritance, like a bridge uniting two worlds, carried it on to us with modifications which adapted Hellenic master-works to later thought and language. The Greek, in a word, generally speaking, taught us Beauty ; the Roman, Dignity.

This bequest belongs to the formal side, the side of art, as

above defined. While it is in this field that we have gained most in a direct way from classical treasures, it would be ungrateful—it would be criminal—to ignore our immense debt to the noble thought, the penetrating insight into human character and life, the profound and exquisite, if limited, feeling for Nature (to touch our own province) which mark classical poetry from Homer onwards. We owe also to the ancients that constantly exhibited preference for objective over subjective treatment of theme which, as Goethe urged, is always the mark of the highest poetry. And if we are dwelling here upon both style and subject, this is because, although, for criticism, form and matter have been necessarily separated, yet the two are interwoven as warp and woof in the fine tapestry of verse, or rather, intimately combined everywhere as if by chemical union.

If, however, here the metaphor of body and soul naturally occurs to the mind, it should recall also at once that vital element from which modern poetry can hardly dissever itself without suicide—that which, in its profoundest sense, the old pre-Christian world inevitably wanted. One ancient literature, however, remains by which the spiritual element was conferred upon humanity, and thus on human song. Palestine and Hellas, Athens and Jerusalem, these unquestionably are the two fountains of whatever is deepest in human thought, human emotion, human art—fountains which, like those fabled ones of

Eros and Anteros at Gadara,

answer and complete each other by their immense contrast. And this contrast, running through every region of man's interest, everywhere appears in the presentation of Landscape in Poetry.

Under its highest aspect the Hebrew treatment has been admirably set forth by Humboldt in his *Cosmos*<sup>1</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> Physical science has advanced with magnificent movement since that work was written. Yet the author enjoyed a range of knowledge, the fruit alike of study and of experience—a width, and at the same time a refinement of taste—a large-minded grasp of life in past and present times, which render *Cosmos* worthy of an attention now—it may be feared—seldom given.

"It is characteristic of Hebrew poetry in reference to "nature, that, as a reflex of monotheism, it always embraces "the whole world in its unity, comprehending the life of the "terrestrial globe as well as the shining regions of space. It "dwells less on details of phenomena, and loves to con- "template great masses. Nature is pourtrayed, not as self- "subsisting, or glorious in her own beauty, but ever in relation "to a higher, an over-ruling, a spiritual power. The Hebrew "bard ever sees in her the living expression of the omni- "presence of God in the works of the visible creation. Thus, "the lyrical poetry of the Hebrews in its descriptions of "nature is essentially, in its very subject, grand and solemn, "and, when touching on the earthly condition of man, full of "a yearning pensiveness."

The landscape of Palestine is of course that mainly presented : the climate, the seasons in their order ; the skies and cloud-region in particular, occupy a large place in the Book of Job. But the sea is also described with a breadth and animation, a sense of life and of wonder, which classical poets do not approach.

We may begin with the blessing of Joseph, as this gives a brief but most poetically felt sketch of the landscape in its largest sense—

Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven,  
for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,  
And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the  
precious things put forth by the moon,  
And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the  
precious things of the lasting hills,  
And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof.<sup>1</sup>

The hundred and fourth Psalm, in our version, is perhaps the noblest example of the Hebrew panorama of Nature ; though no word analogous to Nature, we should note, ever occurs, either as a brief synonym for the external aspect of things, or, as we commonly use it, for a kind of abstract medium between God and the universe. This Song of the World begins with the Heavens, the Clouds, the Earth, the

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxxii, 13.

rivers, grass and herbs for animals ; wine and bread for man. Follow details of the landscape : the trees of the Lord, cedars with nestling birds ; the stork on the fir-tree ; hills and rocks for goats and conies.

Let me quote here a few stanzas from the magnificent rendering of this psalm by that deep-souled neglected poet, Henry Vaughan. He is speaking of the brooks which run from hill to valley—

These to the beasts of every field give drink ;  
There the wild asses swallow the cold spring :  
And birds amongst the branches on their brink  
Their dwellings have, and sing.

Thou giv'st the trees their greenness, ev'n to those,  
Cedars in Lebanon, in whose thick boughs  
The birds their nests build ; though the stork doth choose  
The fir trees for her house.

To the wild goats the high hills serve for folds,  
The rocks give conies a retiring place :  
Above them the cool moon her known course holds,  
And the sun runs his race.

Then the poet turns to night and its terrors of wild beasts, until the human figure has its place—

Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour, until the evening.  
O Lord, how manifold are Thy works ; in wisdom hast Thou  
made them all ; the earth is full of Thy riches.

But as the picture of life and of God's power is not exhausted, the song proceeds to the sea and its innumerable indwellers, all dependent upon Him for their sustenance and creation, as He renews the face of the earth : until, summing up all these wonders in the glory of their Maker, the royal poet strikes a note unknown to Athens or to Rome, as he tells of the God who *rejoices in His works*.

Similar, though more dramatic, is the picture given in the hundred and seventh Psalm, telling of God's goodness to man, and ending with that vivid scene of the ship at sea,

which, like numerous passages in classical poetry, sets the sailor's life before us as the most perilous, the most helpless position in which man can place himself, until brought "unto the haven where he would be"; again "to praise the Lord "for His goodness," and exalt His works as proofs and witnesses of Almighty power. And with these psalms we may join the (doubtless later) *Song of the Three Children*: that exhaustive catalogue of Nature—which may be compared with the panorama from Deuteronomy already quoted—animate and inanimate, yet raised into lofty poetry by the directness of its detail, and more, by the intensity with which it is throughout vitalised by union with the Creator's glory, thus proclaiming everywhere the universal Reign of Law.

More wild and powerful are the delineations—marvellous in their force and truth—of the wonders of Creation in the Book of Job. No poetry can be found more vividly impressive than that which puts the horse before us in his native majesty; nor do even the astonishing revelations of modern astronomy sound more mysterious and magical than the very names of the great stars, as placed in the mouth of their Maker—Pleiades, Orion, Mazzaroth, and Arcturus.

We may compare with the psalms of devotion and thankful reverence, the sad tones ascribed to Solomon in his day of disillusion—that preacher whose moral is the *Vanitas Vanitatum* of all human life—

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh :  
but the earth abideth for ever.

The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to  
his place where he arose.

The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the  
north : it whirleth about continually : and the wind returneth  
again according to his circuits.

All the rivers run into the sea ; yet the sea is not full : unto the  
place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

In contrast then to the dark desolate pensiveness of *Ecclesiastes*, let us place the picture of faith and religious confidence, drawn by Habakkuk in words of singular beauty—

Although the fig tree shall not blossom,  
Neither shall fruit be in the vines ;  
The labour of the olive shall fail,  
And the fields shall yield no meat ;  
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,  
And there shall be no herd in the stalls :  
    Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,  
    I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Such are the main characteristics of the landscape in the Old Testament. But another, a rarer aspect, appears in the two idyllic poems, as they may be justly named, *Ruth* and *Solomon's Song*. In *Ruth* it is the atmosphere of the harvest field, the young reapers at their work, the fair girl amidst the "alien corn," which we see. The *Song* goes more into detail—

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away ;  
For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone ;  
The flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land :  
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Or again—

Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field ; let us lodge in the villages.

Let us get up early to the vineyards : let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth : There will I give thee my loves.

Here we have a tenderness of sentiment uniting the human lovers with the charm of Nature, not indeed unknown to Theocritus and to Vergil (*Huc ades, O Galatea*, see p. 47), but more modern, more *intime*. And both here and in the Psalms already quoted, observe also how the landscape is treated as a direct source of gladness to the heart ; the poet, as it were, rejoices with the Creator's rejoicing over the beauty or grandeur of His own works. This feeling of delight, again, is not

wholly wanting in the *Anthology*. But a sentiment which was doubtless implicit in the Hellenic mind, finds a more distinct and overt utterance in the Hebrew.

Again, poets in Greece, writing always with Greek reserve, loved most the cultivated landscape, for the pleasure of the eye, and for physical comfort; in Italy, they spoke out more freely, fond of parklike scenery and mountains for meditative repose—

O were there one to place me in the cool hill-girt valleys of Haemus, and shelter with a giant shade of branches !<sup>1</sup>

The Hebrew threw his heart more deeply into the landscape; loving it more passionately as the Creator's own immediate work, and hence, nearer also to His creatures. But it might carry us too far, were we to pursue these contrasts into more detail.

Returning, lastly, to Solomon's Song, a unique kind of panorama is there set before us—

Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

If the landscape of the Old Testament differs from the Greek in its constant use of details to enforce a moral lesson upon man, it hardly differs less if we reflect on this suggestive scene, which recalls in miniature those more elaborate by Milton in both his *Paradises*, or the mountain pictures of Wordsworth. Compared with classical verse, the Hebrew here vindicates to itself a world-wide view. In this respect, as in its deep introspective tone, its constant reference to first causes, and the presence of God in His creation, it preludes, rather, prepares and lays down the way to modern thought and feeling.

The Hebrew poetry, regarded strictly, closes here. But I must add, with the reverence due, a few words from the

<sup>1</sup> —o qui me gelidis convallibus Haemi  
sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra.—*Georg.* II, 488.

*Sermon on the Mount*, which seem to penetrate the very soul of Nature, brief as they are, with a depth unrivalled. God—to take the beautiful language of J. H. Newman—"does not "bid us renounce the creation, but associates us with the most "beautiful portions of it. He likens us to the flowers with "which he has ornamented the earth, and to the birds that live "solitary under heaven, and makes them the type of a Christian. "He denies us Solomon's regal magnificence, to unite us to the "lilies of the field and the fowls of the air. *Take no thought "for your life. . . . Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*"<sup>1</sup> It is for these last words that I quote the passage. Familiar as it may be to us, the lesson is one for which all the literature of Greece and Rome might be searched in vain.

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. vi, 25; J. H. Newman, Sermon on *Present Blessings*.

## CHAPTER VII

### *LANDSCAPE IN EARLY ITALIAN POETRY*

WE now reach the immense gap—the gap of near one thousand years—which parts the literatures of Greece and Rome in their large, their living sense, from modern literature in its first mediaeval form. Our own country, indeed, and ours almost alone, does supply a few invaluable fragments, Celtic and Anglo-Saxon, midway. These, however, I propose to take presently as part of our main and final subject, when English poetry, which, like English art, is so exceptionally rich in landscape, comes before us. Meanwhile, as in my general sketch was noticed, Nature, hitherto mainly regarded by the classical writers as external to Man, not yet loved and described for her own sake, or thought to entreature moral lessons for us—Nature, as culture recommenced with the earlier Renaissance, was henceforth felt to be sympathetic with humanity, and shared in the passion of the poet. The old world, we might say, loved her ; the modern feels her love.

This great advance may be traced to two causes. First, the Celtic and the Teutonic blood, which now overcame the Roman in Western Europe, seems fashioned to a more self-conscious, a more emotional, or (to sum up in common phrase) a more romantic temperament. That quality placed Man in closer union with what he saw about him ; his heart opened freely to the heart of Nature. But, secondly, this in-born impulse was immensely vivified, as the result of that great gulf which lies between Christianity and the ethnic religions in general. No true personal love to God or the gods,

I think we may broadly say, was felt by Greek or Roman. They admired, they revered, they believed, more perhaps than is commonly acknowledged. But genuine love to the Divine Beings, belief in whom and reliance is of the absolute essence of Christianity ; and with this, loving remembrance of those rather departed than dead ; these are the special, the distinctive marks of Christian faith. And into that faith the whole Hebrew theism was absorbed. Hence the poetry of the Old Testament, always sublime, often symbolical, greatly influenced mediaeval writers. The Bible held the same place of power as did Homer among his countrymen. And hence too, with this personal love to God, came love for the work in which He shows Himself throughout Nature. There has been indeed at times, to digress for a moment, even a certain tinge of that Pantheistic feeling which is hardly separable from such love ; although in this it should be hardly needful to add that all reference to anything of the nature of sin, was wholly excluded. Here we touch Wordsworth's celebrated lines—

The Being, that is in the clouds and air,  
That is in the green leaves among the groves,  
Maintains a deep and reverential care  
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.

But this peculiar sentiment seems to have been unknown to mediaeval feeling about Nature, and hence did not overtly affect the landscape of poetry in that region which is now before us.

Before, however, turning to this, I must, half reluctantly yet inevitably, once more limit the field of my essay. Provençal poetry, the first clear exhibition of mediaeval song ; then that of Northern France and of England under Norman influence ; last, that of early Germany, must be here passed by. It is indeed only among the once famous Minnesinger school of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, so far as my limited knowledge goes, that a distinctive landscape element is found.

It is the Italy of mediaeval and later days which will be our proper prologue to England ; her literary forms effected

the true, the cardinal, transition from the old world to the new ; it was by Italy also that Englishmen, earliest at once and most deeply, have been moved. We see this in studying the Renaissance, both in its earlier Cosmopolitan, and its later specifically Italian movement. Indeed, our present concern is, as it were, a small chapter in that great subject—a detailed and magnified section of the story of the Renaissance power over English "Makers."

Although Italian poetry, dating from the Sicilian Ciullo d'Alcamo about 1220,<sup>1</sup> had already fixed its main lines before Dante (1265-1321) ; yet with him, for three reasons, I begin. Dante raised his art conspicuously from the narrow, the mainly amorous, range of the South-French lyrics hitherto prevalent in Italy, to poetry capable of dealing with every great problem of life and nature. He also, as I have said, is the one absolutely Imperial poet in all the centuries between Vergil and Shakespeare ; the *Commedia* stands as the milestone dividing the long road between the finest flower of classical and of modern poetry—itself equal in rank with the finest. Lastly, it is a special pride to remember that in England his power as poet was earliest recognised beyond his own country. We, too, by the admirable essay of Dean Church may claim a first-rate appreciation, worthy the subject, of Dante's genius. From this I quote a few words. The main mark and leading impulse was that "upon all wisdom, beauty, and excellence, " the Church had taught him to see, in various and duly distinguished degrees, the seal of the one Creator. . . . Dante's "eye was free and open to external nature in a degree new " among poets ; certainly in a far greater degree than among "the Latins, even including Lucretius, whom he probably had " never read." And his supreme gift in poetry intensified to the highest his vignettes from Nature ; with him "words cut " deeper than is their wont." For many of these pictures the groundwork was supplied by the frequent journeys of the poet's wandering, tempest-tossed life ; and, as in Italy mountain

<sup>1</sup> So Nannucci, in his excellent *Manuale* (1843). There is also a later edition. This book may be strongly commended to all lovers of the fair land and her delightful poets.

ranges are never out of sight, it is mountain scenery which he paints with special interest. Yet, so wealthy and varied was his imaginative power, that *Landscape* forms only a small part of those details drawn from every aspect of real life in which the *Commedia*, I believe, surpasses every other poem.

We begin with what Dean Plumptre, in his very close translation of the *Commedia*,<sup>1</sup> describes as "among the longest" "and most vivid of [the landscapes] in the poem; the typical "example of the union of the power that observes the phaen- "omena of external nature with insight into human feelings as "affected by them." It is a day in early spring, just as the hoar-frost disappears before the sun. The passage opens the twenty-fourth Canto of the *Inferno*; and I shall use the Dean's faithful rendering, line for line, of the original text.

In that first season of the youthful year,  
 When the sun's locks the chill Aquarius shakes,  
 And now the nights to half the day draw near,—  
 When on the ground the hoar-frost semblance makes  
 Of the fair image of her sister white,<sup>2</sup>  
 But soon her brush its colour true forsakes,—  
 The peasant churl, whose store is emptied quite,  
 Rises and looks around, and sees the plains  
 All whiten'd, and for grief his hip does smite,  
 Turns to his house, and up and down complains,  
 Like the poor wretch who knows not what to do ;  
 Then back he turns, and all his hope regains,  
 Seeing the world present an alter'd hue,  
 In little time, and takes his shepherd's crook,  
 And drives his lambs to roam through pastures new.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Commedia* and (complete) *Canzoniere* of Dante Alighieri, New Translation, by E. H. Plumptre, Dean of Wells, 1886-87—another book which I venture strongly to recommend to true lovers of poetry. It is a treasury of Dantesque science. In the quotations, the text of A. J. Butler's excellent edition of the *Commedia* (where it is accompanied by a literal prose version) has been here followed.

<sup>2</sup> The snow.

<sup>3</sup> In quella parte del giovinetto anno,  
 Che il sole i crin sotto l' Aquario tempra,  
 E già le notti al mezzo di sen vanno :

With what refinement does Dante here contrast hoar-frost with snow :—It is like the exquisite delicacy with which a Titian or a Rembrandt vary their subtle passages of white drapery.

Taking now the living creatures of the landscape, some vignettes of the Greek *Anthology* are here recalled—

As are the goats that on the mountain height,  
Ere they are fed, full wild, and wanton bound,  
Then, tame and still, to chew the cud delight,  
Hush'd in the shade, while all is glare around,  
Watch'd by the shepherd, who upon his rod  
Leans, and, so leaning, keeps them safe and sound.<sup>1</sup>

Dante's pictures of the birds are frequent and exquisite—

As bird, within the leafy home it loves,  
Upon the nest its sweet young fledglings share,  
Resting, while night hides all that lives and moves,  
Who, to behold the objects of her care,  
And find the food that may their hunger stay,—  
Task in which all hard labours grateful are,—  
Prevents the dawn, and, on an open spray,  
With keen desire awaits the sun's bright rays,  
And wistful look till gleams the new-born day ;

Quando la brina in sulla terra assempra  
L' imagine di sua sorella bianca,  
Ma poco dura alla sua penna tempra ;  
Lo villanello, a cui la roba manca,  
Si leva e guarda, e vede la campagna  
Biancheggiar tutta, ond' ei si batte l' anca :  
Ritorna in casa, e quà e là si lagna,  
Come il tapin che non sa che si faccia ;  
Poi riede, e la speranza ringavagna,  
Veggendo il mondo aver cangiata faccia  
In poco d' ora, e prende suo vincastro,  
E fuor le pecorelle a pascer caccia.

<sup>1</sup> Quali si fanno ruminando manse  
Le capre, state rapide e proterve  
Sopra le cime, avanti che sien pranse,  
Tacite all' ombra mentre che il Sol ferse,  
Guardate dal pastor, che in su la verga  
Poggiato s' è, e lor poggiato serve. . . .  
*{Purg. xxvii, 76-81.*

So did my Lady then, with fixéd gaze,  
Stand upright . . .<sup>1</sup>

Again, when Paolo and Francesca are summoned, as they glide circling in their fated penal course, to speak with the poet—

E'en as doves, when love its call has given,  
With open, steady wings to their sweet nest  
Fly, by their will borne onward through the heaven,<sup>2</sup>

they come to tell their sad story. Compare now with this the souls of the righteous resting in their supreme happiness above ; they are—

As is a lark that cleaves at will the sky,  
First singing loud, then silent and content,  
With that last sweetness that doth satisfy.

But here I must give the exquisite original, beyond even Shelley, beyond even Wordsworth—

Qual lodoletta, che in aere si spazia  
Prima cantando, e poi tace contenta  
Dell' ultima dolcezza, che la sazia.<sup>3</sup>

And to complete Dante's bird-pictures, take this one with its heavenly landscape—

<sup>1</sup> Come l' augello intra l' amate fronde,  
Posato al nido dei suoi dolci nati,  
La notte che le cose ci nasconde,  
Che per veder gli aspetti desiati,  
E per trovar lo cibo onde gli pasca,  
In che i gravi labor gli sono aggrati,  
Previene il tempo in su l' aperta frasca,  
E con ardente affetto il sole aspetta,  
Fiso guardando, pur che l' alba nasca ;  
Così la Donna mia si stava eretta,  
Ed attenta . . .

*Par. xxiii, 1-11.*

<sup>2</sup> Quali colombe dal disio chiamate,  
Con l' ali alzate e ferme, al dolce nido  
Volan per l' aer dal voler portate.

*Inf. v, 82.*

<sup>3</sup> *Par. xx, 73.* Butler reads *Quale allodetta*, but gives also the form I have here preferred.

—A sweet breeze towards me then did blow  
 With calm unvarying course upon my face,  
 Not with more force than gentlest wind doth show.  
 Thereat the leaves, set trembling all apace,  
 Bent themselves, one and all, towards the side  
 Where its first shade the Holy Hill doth trace ;  
 Yet from the upright swerved they not aside  
 So far that any birds upon the spray  
 Ceased by their wonted taskwork to abide,  
 But, with full heart of joy, the breeze of day  
 They welcomed now within their leafy bower,  
 Which to their songs made music deep to play,  
 Like that which through the pine-wood runs each hour,  
 From branch to branch, upon Chiassi's shore,  
 When Aeolus lets loose Sirocco's power.<sup>1</sup>

Two other admirable vignettes may here be added, rendering effects of sun and sea—

Bethink thee, Reader, if on Alpine height  
 A cloud hath wrapt thee, through which thou hast seen,  
 As the mole through its membrane sees the light,  
 How when the vapours moist and dense begin  
 Themselves to scatter, then the sun's bright sphere  
 All feebly enters in the clouds between.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Un' aura dolce, senza mutamento  
 Avere in sè, mi feria per la fronte,  
 Non di più colpo che soave vento ;  
 Per cui le fronde tremolando pronte  
 Tutte quante piegavano alla parte  
 U' la prim' ombra gitta il santo monte ;  
 Non però dal lor esser dritto sparte  
 Tanto che gli augelletti per le cime  
 Lasciassero d' operare ogni lor arte ;  
 Ma con piena letizia l' ore prime  
 Cantando riceviéno intra le foglie,  
 Che tenevan bordone alle sue rime ;  
 Tal, qual di ramo in ramo si raccoglie,  
 Per la pineta in sul lito di Chiassi,  
 Quand' Eolo Scirocco fuor discioglie.

*Purg. xxviii, 7.*

<sup>2</sup> Ricorditi, lettore, se mai nell' alpe  
 Ti colse nebbia, per la qual vedessi  
 Non altriamenti che per pelle talpe ;

Greek and Roman must have often climbed high enough to witness this; yet who has painted it? Again, when at the foot of the mount of Purgatory—

The dawn was overcoming the shade of early morning, which fled before it, so that from afar I knew the trembling of the sea.<sup>1</sup>

"Nowhere," truly remarks Mr. Gilbert, "not in the *innumerable laughter* of the sea-waves of Aeschylus, nor in "Keble's *many-twinkling smile of ocean*, have we a more "delicate landscape touch."<sup>2</sup>

These are but samples from Dante's endless flashes of natural life—fixed for ever by that union of lucid swiftness, vivid intensity, and haunting music, in which he often rivals Pindar.

As a specimen of reference to actual scenery, doubtless noted by the wanderer, we may give the picture of a landslip among the mountains north of Verona, as compared with the pass to the seventh Circle of Hell—

So doth that ruin beyond Trent appear  
Which on the flank into the Adige dash'd  
Through earthquake or through prop that fail'd to bear;  
For from the mountain-top whence down it crash'd  
E'en to the plain the rock so falls away,  
That one above might climb o'er stones detach'd.<sup>3</sup>

Such, again, are the glimpses, slight yet precise, of the sea-

Come quando i vapori umidi e spessi  
A diradar cominciansi, la spera  
Del Sol debilmente entra per essi.

*Purg.* xvii, 1.

<sup>1</sup> L' alba vinceva l' ora mattutina,  
Che fuggia innanzi, si che di lontano  
Conobbi il tremolar della marina.

*Purg.* i, 115.

<sup>2</sup> J. Gilbert, *Landscape in Art before Claude and Salvator*.

<sup>3</sup> Qual è quella ruina, che nel fianco  
Di quà da Trento l' Adice percosse  
O per tremuoto o per sostegno manco;  
Chè da cima del monte, onde si mosse,  
Al piano è sì la roccia discoscesa,  
Ch' alcuna via darebbe a chi su fosse.

*Inf.* xii, 4.

wall of Flanders between Bruges and Wissant (Guizzante), and to the embankment made in the Alps along the Brenta by the Paduans.<sup>1</sup> Above all, we have that passionate remembrance, placed in the mouth of a sinner sunk in the tenth pit of Hell, of *the little streams that flow down from the green hills of Casentino to Arno, making their beds cool and soft.*<sup>2</sup>

Other recollections of Italian travel presented at some length will be found in the description of the course of the river Acquaqueta (*Inf. xvi.* 94-102) and of the Lago di Garda and the Mincio (*Inf. xx.* 61-81). R. W. Church enumerates also: “*The fair river that flows among the poplars between Chiaveri and Sestri; the rough and desert ways between Lerici and Turbia, and those towery cliffs going sheer into the deep sea at Noli.*” But before quitting this fascinating poem, we must have a singular short vignette of flowers, as viewed in the sunlight by a spectator standing without it. Dante, led by Beatrice, is looking on a crowd of Shining Ones. He sees them—

As oft mine eyes have look'd on flowery plain,  
Themselves o'ershadow'd, whilst clear sunlight beam'd  
Through rift in cloud-banks, brighter after rain.<sup>3</sup>

Small as this picture is, I would venture to say that no such subtle scene can be found in any classical poet: none wherein the impression on the soul raised by the contrast of light and dark so forms the poet's picture.

Lastly, I will add a beautiful example of Dante's refined treatment of Nature, from the *Edinburgh Review* of April 1895. Dante has often followed Vergil; yet not as a mere

<sup>1</sup> Quale i Fiamminghi tra Guizzante e Bruggia . . .  
E quale i Padovani lungo la Brenta . . .

*Inf. xv.*, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Li ruscelletti, che dei verdi colli  
Del Casentino discendon giuso in Arno,  
Facendo i lor canali freddi e molli.

*Inf. xxx.*, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Come a raggio di sol, che puro mei  
Per fratta nube, già prato di fiori  
Vider coperti d' ombra gli occhi miei.

*Par. xxiii.*, 79.

copyist, but working on the text of the great Latin poet in his own exquisite style. Thus from *Aen.* vi, 309, he takes—

quam multa in silvis autumni frigore primo  
lapsa cadunt folia—

where Vergil's comparison is simply between the numbers of the leaves and of the souls preparing to enter Charon's boat. Dante adds to this a larger, a more picturesque, an almost subjective treatment:—*As in autumn the leaves lift themselves off one after the other, until the branch sees on the earth all its spoils*<sup>1</sup>—

Note the gentle fluttering down of the leaves expressed by *si levan*: “The most perfect image possible,” Ruskin remarks, “of ‘the utter lightness [of the spirits], feebleness, passiveness;’ next, the continuousness of the shower, till the branch is left bare; last, the pathetic touch—

infin che il ramo  
Vede alla terra tutte le sue spoglie—

as though the bare bough looked wistfully at its own leafage strewn below.<sup>2</sup>

After Dante, the modern world frankly begins. Landscape, with him, has now become no longer the mere background, but is pointedly united with human emotion. And this conception (though not always expressed) yet rarely henceforth fails to make itself felt in poetry. It is blended with Dante's soul and verse, not perhaps more delicately and accurately than with Wordsworth's, but as intimately, as lovingly. This aspect, this marriage of Nature and Man, as Blake might have called it, this gentle pensiveness, appears in the lyrics of Petrarch (1304-1374) even more markedly than in the

<sup>1</sup> Come d' autunno si levan le foglie  
L' una appresso dell' altra, infin che il ramo  
Vede alla terra tutte le sue spoglie.      *Inf. iii, 112.*

<sup>2</sup> Compare with this, Keble—

See the calm leaves float  
Each to his rest beneath their parent shade:  
How like decaying life they seem to glide!

*Commedia*—a result which we might naturally expect from him, who more truly than any other since Sappho, may be named Poet of Love. Thus, in an early sonnet, the poet, wandering through wild places, such as abound about Vaucluse, ends it thus—

I think now that mountains and river-banks, streams and woods know of what natural temperament hidden from others is my life : yet cannot I find ways, paths so rugged and so wild, that Love does not always come speaking with me, and I with him.<sup>1</sup>

How modern, how sentimental is this, compared even with Dante ! Perhaps some reminiscence of Vergil's style tinges the following evening scene :—

When the shepherd sees the rays of the great Planet ebb towards the nest in which he houses himself, and the eastern regions darken,—he rises, and leaving grass and fountains and beech trees, with his familiar crook gently moves his flock : then, far from the crowd, patches up with green leaves a little home or cavern, and there without thought he takes his leisure and sleeps.<sup>2</sup>

But the sense of sympathy received from Nature predominates with Petrarch—

From thought to thought, from mountain to mountain, Love guides me. . . . If by some solitary shore [be] river, or fountain,

<sup>1</sup> Io mi credo omai che monti e piagge  
E fiumi e selve sappian di che tempre  
Sia la mia vita, ch' è celata altrui.  
Ma pur si aspre vie né si selvagge  
Cercar non so, ch' Amor non venga sempre  
Ragionando con meco, ed io con lui.

*Son. xxii, In Vita di Madonna Laura* (Felice Le Monnier, 1854).

<sup>2</sup> Quando vede 'l pastor calare i raggi  
Del gran pianeta al nido ov' egli alberga,  
E 'mbrunir le contrade d' oriente,  
Drizzasi in piedi, e con l' usata verga,  
Lassando l' erba e le fontane e i faggi,  
Move la schiera sua soavemente ;  
Poi lontan dalla gente,  
O casetta o spelunca  
Di verdi frondi ingiunca :  
Ivi senza pensier s' adagia e dorme.

*Canz. iv, In Vita.*

if a shady valley rests between two hills, there the desponding soul calms itself. . . : Among lofty mountains and rough woods I find some repose.<sup>1</sup>

The feeling which inspires these lines is indeed, as we have already noticed, found in Vergil, who was doubtless known by heart to Petrarch. Yet it is more marked here: the mediaeval mind was probably influenced in this sentiment by the hermits and the recluse religious orders who, in those often stormy days, sheltered everywhere, as notably in the Grande Chartreuse, among forest caverns or mountain solitudes. Petrarch gives also a contrasted landscape, where all things flourish under the presence of his lady;<sup>2</sup> or *Heaven lights up around her with lovely stars, and visibly rejoices in the serenity flowing from those fair eyes.*<sup>3</sup> Or how in Valchiusa itself, when all was lost, *the waters speak of love, and the hour and the trees: birds and fish; flowers and grass; all praying together that I should ever love her who had been taken from him.*<sup>4</sup> But here I must repeat the actual words, in which we have that Greek directness of phrase, together with that pathetic simplicity at the close, in which Petrarch is so eminent a master—

L' acque parlan d' amore e l' ora e i rami,  
E gli augelletti e i pesci e i fiori e l' erba,  
Tutti insieme pregando ch' i' sempr' ami.

His love, truly, in the graceful words of Carew, was a passion

That did in such sweet smooth-paced numbers flow,  
As made the world enamour'd of his woe.

<sup>1</sup> Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte,  
Mi guida Amor. . .  
Se 'n solitaria piaggia, rivo o fonte,  
Se 'n fra duo poggi siede ombrosa valle,  
Ivi s' acqueta l' alma sbigottita . . .  
Per alti monti e per selve aspre trovo  
Qualche riposo . . .

*Canz. xiii, In Vita.*

<sup>2</sup> Son. cxi, "Lieti fiori e felici . . ."  
<sup>3</sup> E 'l ciel di vaghe e lucide faville  
S' accende intorno, e 'n vista si rallegra  
D' esser fatto seren da sì begli occhi.

*Son. cxl, In Vita.*

<sup>4</sup> Son. xii, *In Morte di Madonna.*

Yet even this delightful poet, the magic of whose charm must disappear, whether prose or verse be chosen to translate him, has not the absolute closeness to natural fact, the certain aim, which never seem to fail Dante. Some portion of that conventionality which later seized upon and fettered Italian poetry is traceable. I give one instance. *Virtue*, he says, as she walks, goes out of Laura's tender feet, which *opens and renews the flowers around her*.<sup>1</sup> Compare this with the perfect truth, and hence the greater beauty, of such floral poems as Wordsworth's *Daffodils*, or how Maud's feet, in Tennyson's lyric, "touch'd the meadows, " And left the daisies rosy."

It is, indeed, another vast interval which parts these two great singers from their successors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries : the Italian Renaissance has come between ; the Latin poets have been embraced as countrymen, and loved only too well. We have, hence, now neither the force and insight of the mediaeval mind, nor the Greek straightforward vision of Nature. From Poliziano (1454-94), through Ariosto to Tasso, she mainly appears in conventional or imitative colours ; rather as stage scenery than as the pictorial background, responsive to human interests.

Such is the elaborate prettiness, the ideal and the natural curiously united, of the landscape in Poliziano's once celebrated *Giostra*—

How it pleases to look upon the goats hanging from a crag,  
and feeding on this or that shrub ; . . . to see the earth covered  
with fruits, every tree as it were hidden in its own produce : . . .  
and the little country girl standing ungirt and barefoot among  
the geese to spin beneath a rock.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vertù ch 'ntorno i fior apra e rinnove  
Delle tenere piante sue par ch' esca.

*Son. cxiv, In Vita.*

<sup>2</sup> Quanto giova a mirar pender da un' erta  
Le capre, e pascer questo e quel virgulto ; . . .

Veder la terra di pomi coperta,  
Ogni arbor da' suo' frutti quasi occulto : . . .  
Or la contadinella scinta e scalza  
Star con l' oche a filar sotto una balza.—Stan. xviii, xix.

Even his exquisitely graceful song of the Mountain Girls has no reference to the landscape ; all they have to say is how content they are—

Di star nell' alpe così poverelle.

In *Le Selve d' Amore*, an idyll of Poliziano's rival poet, Lorenzo de' Medici (1448-92), we find the same merely enumerative picturing of country scenes as in the *Giostra*: no fresh natural landscape ; the same unreal mythological treatment. Nor, despite its rustic dialect, are we any nearer Nature in Lorenzo's once famous pastoral celebrating the fair *Nencia da Barberino*. The canzone named *May* tells only of girls and lovers, at whose sports *Love comes laughing, roses and lilies on his head*—

Amor ne vien ridendo  
Con rose e gigli in testa . . .

while the *Happy Violets* of his sonnet, we are told, owe all their colour and scent to Beauty's hand that gathered them.

In the *Giostra* we have also a Garden of Venus, precursor probably of the similar fancy pieces by Ariosto, Tasso, Spenser, Marini, and Camoens—

A wall of gold crowns the outer banks and a shady valley of low shrubs, where beneath boughs among fresh leaves sweet birds sing their love<sup>1</sup>—

the idea almost nothing, the music how perfect !

Corona un muro d' or l'estreme sponde  
Con valle ombrosa di schietti arboscelli,  
Ove in su' rami fra novelle fronde  
Cantan gli loro amor soavi augelli.

Let me here anticipate for a moment, and compare with this lovely extravaganza the picture of Paradise yet unlost, where

Over-head up-grew  
Insuperable height of loftiest shade,  
Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm,

<sup>1</sup> Stan. lxxi.

A sylvan scene ; and, as the ranks ascend  
 Shade above shade, a woody theatre  
 Of stateliest view. Yet higher than their tops  
 The verdurous wall of Paradise up-sprung . . .

Or where, presently—

—palmy hillock, or the flowery lap  
 Of some irriguous valley spread her store,  
 Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose.

The *Eclogues* of Sannazzaro (1458-1530) repeat the same artificial character ; although in some of his lyrics is a reality of passion very rare in that age. But we need not further examine these Titanic landscapes. Full as they are of charm, it is not the charm of Nature in her simplicity ; like Browning's *Patriot* in his hour of triumph, it is "roses, roses all the way"—the florid moment of an expiring style.

Now, when quitting Italy, that the most melodious of her many melodists may not be wholly passed over, take from one of his *Canzoni* Tasso's Lament for Corinna—

The white privet flower falls and rises again and blossoms anew, and the purple rose when plucked is born again from her thorns and opens her odorous bosom to the sweet sun-rays : Pines and beeches shed their leaves on earth, and the boughs then reclothe themselves with their green spoils : The star of love sets and rises :—Ay me ! Corinna, thou hast set, to rise no more.<sup>1</sup>

*Ipsa molliities*—sweet tenderness itself—we might say with Sir H. Wotton when writing of Milton's early lyrics ; but how

<sup>1</sup> Cade il bianco ligusto, e poi risorge,  
 E di nuovo germoglia ;  
 E dalle spine ancor purpurea rosa  
 C'olta rinasce, e spiega  
 L' odorato suo grembo ai dolci raggi ;  
 Spargono i pini e i faggi  
 Le frondi a terra, e di lor verde spoglia  
 Poi rivestono i rami ;  
 Cade e risorge l' amorosa stella :  
 Tu caderesti, Corinna (ahi duro caso !),  
 Per non risorger mai.

*Rime Scelte di Torquato Tasso* (1824).

much less substance is here; how inferior is it to Dante's minute vividness in painting! Beauty is indeed the final word of Art; but not the beauty of sound alone, or colour alone, or form alone. Art for art's sake suffices not in poetry; what we imperatively need (if I may say so) is the soul for the soul's sake.

To sum up the landscape of the Renaissance, Italy not only falls below her mediaeval attempts, but is notably inferior to classical work. Her advance in literature lay in the sense of measure and proportion, in language more highly wrought and harmonised, continuous melodic sweetness, in beautiful transferences from the Latin Muses. The eye, in one word, though always on Beauty, is no longer fixed (to repeat the phrase which must ever recur when we try to appreciate art) upon the actual object; the *disinterested* stage is over. And hence the seventeenth century decline in poetry and painting.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *LANDSCAPE IN CELTIC AND GAELIC POETRY*

WE now quit, for English poetry, transmarine Europe ; neither space nor knowledge suffice to examine the poetical literatures of France or Germany, Spain or Portugal. So far as I am aware, the Renaissance conventionalities largely rule them until, or near, the nineteenth century. From this date, French, German, and Italian poetry at least are more or less assimilated in landscape treatment to our own. Goethe, Heine, Lamartine, Leopardi, are here names which may suggest how wide and how attractive the field is, and also how much beyond my present compass. Yet it must be allowed that any influence—if any—these literatures have held over English Nature poetry is singularly slight. For the landscape of painting and of poetry in its fullness, in its imaginative quality, may be claimed specially as our own. Field and forest, moisture and mist and greenery, bring it within the range of pictorial art in a degree not, I think, found elsewhere through continental Europe. But, above all, that Roman love of the country and of country life has reproduced itself among Englishmen with a unique and abiding power : and this reacts upon and inspires song. Let us therefore turn henceforth to England.

Great almost as the contrast between the classical and the Hebrew poetry, is that between the late Italian and the primitive and mediaeval Celtic—between Tasso in the sixteenth century and Taliesin in the seventh. The special qualities of the Celtic genius in poetry were set forth by Matthew Arnold with a true poet's insight and grace, and in

specifying them I cannot do better than follow, in some degree, my distinguished predecessor at Oxford. It is, I think, impossible to avoid agreeing with him that Celtic verse, compared with the classical and the English, fails alike in constructive faculty, in architectonic power, in sense of proportion, and in width of range. No sign seems to exist that either the Gael or the Cymry ever created a true Epic poem. To France, Germany, England, the Arthurian legends owe, so far as it exists, their poetic unity.<sup>1</sup> The "penetrating passion and "melancholy," as Arnold names it, of the Celt, found its natural, its inevitable expression in the Lyric: that poetical form which has ever been consecrated, though not confined, to the relief of personal feeling, the overflow of the oppressed, the yearning, or the exultant heart. To that passion the race added a singular insight and happiness in rendering the magical charm, the inner intimate life of Nature, the world of fairy which atmospheres the material world. This gift, this mode of ideality we may name it, is something beyond the simple beauty perceived with such delicate clearness by the Greek, the dignity and the sentiment by which the Roman was penetrated. And all was moulded by the Celtic bards into an admirable and rarely failing perfection of style, which we can only think of as an innate gift of the race from the seventh century onward.

Arnold's bold but hazardous deduction is well known; that the Celtic blood, beyond question largely interfused with the English, throughout all Western England at least, has given our poetry much of its characteristic, its most subtle, magical, and passionate notes. This is a dangerously attractive doctrine; it

<sup>1</sup> Macpherson's attempt to give Epic form to the fragmentary Gaelic lays which it must be fully admitted were known to him, was the reason that, when his once famous *Ossian* appeared, justified critics like Johnson in holding it a forgery. No scholars, we must remember, at that date had seriously examined the traditional songs of the Gael. Hence also that real vein of sad solemnity, that pathetic cry, that sublimity of wild moor and mountain, which underlie the decorative disguise thrown over them by Macpherson, were unfelt by his English contemporaries, with the single but emphatic exception of Gray. Across the Channel these true Ossianic qualities were better recognised—the modernisms, palpable to us, being naturally less perceptible in France or Germany.

has reached a rapid acceptance, falling in with that search after *Origines* which is so popular—in many ways I will venture to add, so misleading—in our day. Yet it seems to me, thus far at any rate, rather assumed upon plausible general grounds as a great underlying influence, than proven in and by the detailed instances which Arnold has brought forward. Whether this scepticism, however, be justified or not, in our islands, almost solely, Celtic poetry yet lives ; on this account, and not less for its own merits, the Celtic landscape, so far as I can make it intelligible through the translations which I shall borrow, demands a place in our essay.

From the seventh century I have said—for to that early date, as Sharon Turner (1803) and Skene<sup>1</sup> more recently have shown, above the reach of reasonable doubt—we must ascribe certain of those rhapsodies, wild and strange as the yet older hymns of the Vedas, which have reached us from Taliesin, Aneurin, and Llywarch the Old. These are mingled indeed, as they have come down to us, with later poems, sheltering under those great mystic names, and doubtless, though in a degree which now defies analysis, modernised in the earliest MSS. that preserve them : the *Black Book* of Caermarthen,<sup>2</sup> and the *Red Book* of Hergest (now in Jesus College Library), compiled in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—names themselves how mystical and remote to our ears ! But these primitive poems contain few references to Nature. A long list of native trees, indeed, is given by Taliesin in the *Battle of Godeu*, when Arthur was defeated by Medraut ; but they seem to be only symbolical of the warriors engaged.<sup>3</sup> In the poems assigned upon fair grounds to Llywarch Hen, it is that Nature plays a notable part. These singular lyrics are written in triplet form, beginning often with a brief glimpse of some landscape feature, and sometimes adding to it a moral or personal reflection, visibly connected or not, with the first lines. Curious that this should be similar

<sup>1</sup> *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, W. F. Skene (1868).

<sup>2</sup> In the Hengwrt Collection belonging to Mr. Wynne of Peniarth : written 1154-89.

<sup>3</sup> This metaphor reappears in those strange and beautiful idyllic stanzas, some of which seem to belong to the early centuries, the *Afallenau*.

to the fashion of the Italian peasant songs of to-day, as recently collected, or as introduced by Browning in his brilliant *Fra Filippo Lippi*. A few of these triplets may be quoted. My first is from a chill winter scene, by Llywarch, twice again dealt with by him in other songs. I follow Skene's literal version—

Cold is the place of the lake before the winter storm :  
Dry the stalks of broken reeds ;  
Lucky is he who sees the [fire]wood in the chest.

Cold is the bed of fish in the shelter of a sheet of ice ;  
Lean the stag ; the topmost reeds move quickly ;  
Short the evening ; bent the trees. . . .

The bees are in confinement this very day ;  
How wither'd the stalks, hard the slope ;  
Cold and dewless is the earth to-day. . . .

Long the night, bare the moor, hoary the cliff ;  
Gray the fair gull on the precipice ;<sup>1</sup>  
Rough the seas ; there will be rain to-day.

So again—

Rain without, the fern is drench'd ;  
White the gravel of the sea ; there is spray on the margin ;  
Reason is the fairest lamp for man. . . .

Rain without, my hair is drench'd ;  
Full of complaint is the feeble ; steep the cliff ;  
Pale white is the sea ; salt is the brine.

These lines are full of the wintry dismal North, whether of Scotland or of Wales. More cheering, more like southern England are the following :—

Bright are the ash-tops ; tall and white will they be  
When they grow in the upper part of the dingle ;  
The languid heart, longing is her complaint. . . .

Bright are the willow tops ; playful the fish  
In the lake ; the wind whistles over the tops of the branches ;  
Nature is superior to learning. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Driven to land by the wind.

Bright the tops of the broom ; let the lover arrange meetings ;  
 Very yellow are the cluster'd branches ;  
 Shallow ford ; the contented is apt to enjoy sleep.

And so forth ; Bright, he sings, are the tops of the apple-tree,  
 of the clover, hazel, reed, oak, hawthorn, meadow-sweet.

To what recurrent play of human fancy, what passion or thought drawn forth by flower and tree, to what similar strain, as if of ancestral blood, are these identities between the seventh century and the nineteenth, between Wales and Tuscany, once Celtic, due ? To the devotees of folk-lore or heredity I gladly remit the perilous—often the vain—task of conjecture.

But Llywarch has left also a very striking song addressed to his crutch, when himself old and feeble, which Arnold selected as an example of the Celt's characteristic sadness—“struggling, fierce, passionate.” Deeply passionate, deeply sad it assuredly is ; but to me it has rather the note of Job ; nay, the note of the broken heart from the beginning—a despair beyond struggle and revolt.

O Staff ! is it not the time of harvest,  
 When the fern is brown, and the reeds are yellow ?  
 Have I not once hated what I now love ?

O Staff ! is not this winter,  
 When men are clamorous over what they drink ?  
 Is not my bedside void of visitors to greet me ! . . .

O Staff ! is it not the spring,  
 When the cuckoos are brownish, when the foam is bright ?  
 I am destitute of a maiden's love. . . .

O Staff ! thou hardy branch  
 That bearest with me—God protect thee !  
 Thou art justly called the tree of wandering. . . .

Wretched was the fate decreed to Llywarch  
 On the night he was born ;  
 Long pain without deliverance from his load of trouble.

I have spoken of these poems as Celtic rather than Welsh, because there is no reasonable doubt that they are true fragments from the literature of the great Celtic kingdom of the

North, the kingdom of Cumbria, the Scottish border, and Strathclyde, and presumably carried south into Wales by immigration during or after the Saxon overthrow of that realm, completed by 946. Their Northern origin seems to have passed out of memory as the three ancient kingdoms of Wales formed themselves ; and we now only have them written down during the second period of bardic brilliancy ; but with what degree, belike, of modernisation (as I have noticed) is now untraceable.

This second period, Stephens, in his valuable though unequal *Literature of the Kymry*,<sup>1</sup> dates from 1080, when for a time Wales regained prosperity under native rulers, while the national spirit was stirred by the frequent wars with England which ended in the death of Llewelyn in 1282, and the final conquest of the country. Although the heroic war-songs of the seventh century were now frequently imitated, yet many poems remain unmistakably different in style and range of themes from the old. The advance of civilisation in the land, to which the influence of the Italian Renaissance (as we find in Dafydd ap Gwilym, of whom more anon), gradually penetrated, brought in a new, an unconsciously modern atmosphere,<sup>2</sup> shown in fully developed systems of rhyme, in freshness of touch, variety in subject, peculiar tenderness of feeling ; whilst there is also an abundance of allusion to Nature, hitherto unfamiliar not only to Welsh poetry, but to that of contemporary Europe. A pretty example of this appears in the frequent poetical comparison of a young beauty to the spray of the sea waves ; or again, her face is like "the 'pearly dew on Eryri" (Snowdon). But the point will be best illustrated by a few quotations.

Our first example is from Gwalchmai (*cir.* 1150-90), one of the best earlier poets of this period. He describes himself watching as a lion on the English border at the Breiddin Hills, near Shrewsbury—

<sup>1</sup> London, 1876, 2nd ed.

<sup>2</sup> To trace the vast change here indicated is beyond my power. It would form an excellent subject for native research, which I venture to suggest to those who arrange the *Eisteddfodau*.

Where the untrodden grass was surpassingly green, the water  
limpid,  
And most fluent of speech the nightingale, well skilled in odes ;  
And where the sea mews were playing on a bed of streams,  
In love-united groups with glittering plumage.  
I love the nightingale of May, with his long white face,  
At the break of day, and at evening's close ;  
I love the sweet musicians, who so fondly dwell  
On clear plaintive murmurs, and the pain of love ;  
I love the birds, and their sweet voices  
In the soothing lay of the wood.

Rightly did the poet, rejoicing thus in the charm of Nature, name his song, *The Delight of Gwalchmai*.

After the English conquest the Cymric Muse for a while languished. An artificial style of elaborate and wearisome rhythmic alliteration<sup>1</sup> ere long established itself. The heroic song now gradually fades, replaced by lyrics of peace and love and Nature—motives less national indeed, but nearer to the common human heart. Thus in the fourteenth century poetry reasserts itself in certain *Verses of the Months*, whence I give, from Stephens, the stanza allotted to March—

March ! Birds are full of boldness,  
Bitter blows the cold blast o'er the furrows,  
The fair weather will outlive the foul,  
Anger lasts longer than grief,  
But every terror will disappear ;  
Every bird knows its mate,  
And all things will come through the earth,  
Save the dead—long is his imprisonment.

How novel in idea is this poetical calendar ! how characteristic of the Celtic spirit this union of Nature and Man ! Similarly, the wild birds of wood and field are often named ; not, indeed, frequently studied by and for themselves, as by Wordsworth ; yet addressed as sympathising with human feeling—a mode of subjective emotion widely diverging from classical treatment.

<sup>1</sup> *Cynganedd.*

An example of this style may be given from the last and greatest of the mediaeval bards, Dafydd ap Gwilym (born probably *cir.* 1340). It is one of the hundred and fifty lyrics which he devoted to his love, Morfydd. He here poetically addresses her under the name of the legendary Essyllt (Yseult), whom he also names Elen, after the supposed British Empress Helena; and Enid, doubtless from the tale which Tennyson has rendered famous.

Dafydd names his lyric a *Song to send the Birds with Messages to a Maid*. I quote the literal version of Mr. Stephens—

I placed my love One who is a second Essyllt	Upon a slender-waisted maid, Of the hue of the waves of the raging sea ( <i>i.e.</i> the foam)
The beauty which adorn'd her For she pierced me	Became to me an arrow, With her glances.
Go, thou Blackbird, And unto her show And thou, Thrush, Take all my plaint And thou, lark, Show to this maid	To the proud and slender maid, For her how much I grieve ; Singing on beautiful branches, To the brilliant Fair ; Bard of morning dawn, My broken heart ;
A nightly companion Let her quickly go	Am I to the Nightingale To the lime-white <sup>1</sup> blessed one,

—and beg her to come to the greenwood and comfort him.

He addresses a similar invitation to another, perhaps earlier Lady-love—Dyddgu—in the wood of Dol Aeron—

There nine trees together stand,  
'Mid the woods, oh ! lovely band,  
Twined into a bright retreat  
For the birds of heaven to meet,  
Forming round our leafy seat  
On the earth a circle fair—

<sup>1</sup> Purely fair : chalk-white standing for snow-white.

A green steeple in the air ;  
 And, below, a glorious hall,  
 Made of golden trefoils all !

Dafydd, who, it may be noticed by the way, was a reader of Ovid, has been named the Petrarch of Wales. His endless songs to his Laura give him some title to this honour. As poet, the faint echo of his verse which my imperfect knowledge affords, does not qualify me for an opinion upon his style or his choice of words, though their high lyrical quality is easily perceptible. But his range of motive is wider than Petrarch's—is more real; he does not follow models, nor analyse his passion. There is, in fine, a wonderful alacrity about him, unlike the dreamy grace of the Italian, as Wales is to Valchiusa. Thus the swan, the thrush, the wind, the thunder, the mist, the snow, the summer, and many more aspects of Nature are vividly personified and painted.

From the *Song of the Thrush* I give a few lines, again from Mr. Stephens—

Speckled was his breast  
 (Appearing) on the branches  
 On the edge of the brook  
 Singing with the dawn

Among the green leaves  
 As a thousand flowers.  
 All hear him,  
 As a silver bell.

From the branches of the hazel  
 He sings an ode  
 With a carol of love  
 To all in the hollow  
 Balm of the heart

Of broad green leaves,  
 To God the Creator ;  
 From the green glade  
 Of the glen, who love him ;  
 To those who love.

I know not if a picture like this be found in any verse hitherto composed in Europe; whether any Greek, Latin, or English poet; whether even Chaucer and his followers, have anything so modern in its sweet sentiment. But if lyrics of this kind seem rather akin to the poetry of England in the sixteenth or nineteenth centuries than to Wales in the fourteenth, Dafydd's espousal to Morfydd is shown in true mediaeval allegorical

vision, wherein the Church service by poetic license is rendered, we might say, in the terms of the wild wood—

In a place of ecstasy I was to-day,  
 Under the mantles of the splendid green hazels,  
 Where I listen'd, at the dawning,  
 To the song of the thrush, skilful in music.<sup>1</sup>

The bell now rings ; Morfydd has sent the thrush as priest ; his surplice is of flowers, his cassock the “flapping wind”—

I heard him in brilliant language  
 Prophesy without ceasing,  
 And read to the parish  
 The gospel without stammering !

And the beautiful nightingale, slender and tall,  
 From the corner of the glen near him,  
 Priest of the dingle ! sang to a thousand ;  
 And the bells of the mass continually did ring,  
 And raised the Host  
 To the sky, above the thicket,  
 And sang stanzas to our Lord and Creator,  
 With sylvan ecstasy and love !

Here, indeed, if anywhere, are the magical Celtic charm, the fairy fancy, the deep delicate rapture of passion. Dafydd merits well the motto from one of the *Triads of the Bards*, prefixed to the translation here followed—

The three indispensable attributes of genius : an eye to see nature—a heart to feel nature—and boldness and energy to follow nature.

My doubts have been already expressed how far we are justified in trying to trace definitely by examples the influence of the Celtic genius on English literature, probable as the general fact may be. But the too common neglect of Welsh poetry,<sup>2</sup> its originality, its peculiar freshness, charm of senti-

<sup>1</sup> This translation, with the Ode to Dyddgu, I take from the beautiful little volume by the Rev. Vaughan Jones, *Bardice*, Maelog (London, 1834).

<sup>2</sup> On this account also I have not thought it worth while to print the

ment, the intimate love of Nature, in her sublime or lovely dress, with its national faithfulness to "Wild Wales," which is always before us—these gifts have led me to dwell on the subject more perhaps than for the sake of my readers I should, but less than I have wished.

The ancient Erse poetry, whether of Ireland or of Scotland, running more or less a parallel course, must now also be too scantily and imperfectly dwelt on. The Gaelic field was indeed excellently touched by my patriotic friend, J. C. Shairp, whose lectures were published in his *Aspects of Poetry* (1881). And I will quote from the translations which he gives a few examples of the landscape, Erse or Gaelic.

We have first a true undecorated fragment of the Ossianic lays—a warrior meets and addresses a maiden on the hillside—

Morna, most lovely among women,  
 Graceful daughter of Cormac,  
 Why by thyself in the circle of stones,  
 In hollow of the rock, on the hill alone?  
 Streams are sounding around thee;  
 The aged tree is moaning in the wind;  
 Trouble is on yonder loch;  
 Clouds darken round the mountain tops;  
 Thyself art like snow on the hill—  
 Thy waving hair like mist of Cromla  
 Curling upwards on the Ben,<sup>1</sup>  
 'Neath gleaming of the sun from the west;  
 Thy soft bosom like the white rock  
 On bank of Brano of foaming streams.

To the same Ossianic class belongs the splendid address to the Sun—

O thou that travellest on high,  
 Round as the warrior's hard full shield,  
 Whence thy brightness without gloom,

original words of our Welsh examples. The Hebrew, Erse, and Saxon texts have also been omitted.

<sup>1</sup> Mountain-top.

Thy light that is lasting, O sun !  
 Thou comest forth strong in thy beauty,  
 And the stars conceal their path ;  
 The moon, all pale, forsakes the sky,  
 To hide herself in the western wave ;  
 Thou, in thy journey, art alone ;  
 Who will dare draw nigh to thee ?  
 The oak falls from the lofty crag ;  
 The rock falls in crumbling decay ;  
 Ebbs and flows the ocean ;  
 The moon is lost aloft in the heaven ;  
 Thou alone dost triumph evermore,  
 In gladness of light all thine own.

Another very early lyric tells us how the fair Deirdre laments being forced back to Erin from her home in the Western Highlands—

Glen Massan, O Glen Massan !  
 High its herbs, fair its boughs,  
 Solitary was the place of our repose,  
 On grassy Invermassan.

Glen Etive ! O Glen Etive !  
 There was raised my earliest home.  
 Beautiful its woods at sunrise,  
 When the sun struck on Glen Etive. . . .

Glendaruadh ! O Glendaruadh !<sup>1</sup>  
 Each man who dwells there I love.  
 Sweet the voice of the cuckoo on bending bough,  
 On the hill above Glendaruadh.

Last, an aged poet's wish—apparently of mediaeval date—

Oh, lay me near the brooks, which slowly move with gentle steps ; under the shade of the budding branches lay my head, and be thou, O sun, in kindness with me. . . .

I see Ben-Aid of beautiful curve, chief of a thousand hills ; the dreams of stags are in his locks, his head in the bed of clouds. . . .

<sup>1</sup> The *d* in the last syllable of *Glendaruadh* is practically *mute*.

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Let the swan of the snowy bosom glide on the top of the waves. When she soars on high among the clouds she will be unencumbered. . . .

Oh, place me within hearing of the great waterfall, where it descends from the rock.

Compare this with the lament of Llywarch Hen. The differences in style and passion between the Gaelic and Welsh poetry we may feel; but only a scholar versed in both languages could define them. The exquisite sensibility of the Celt, however, his pensive melancholy, his power of penetrating the soul of the landscape and of tracing its affinity to the human soul, as Shairp notes, assuredly thrill through these beautiful lyrics.

The foregoing poems have been grouped in connection with Scotland under the general name Gaelic. Yet several must have originated in that earlier Scotia which we know as Ireland. Such are the song to Morna, the lament of Deidre; whatever, in brief, has a reasonable claim to be termed Ossianic. But all that early history, Irish or Scottish, is too thickly veiled in the mists of vague tradition—too nebulous,—to bear strict analysis. Our examples, however, make it clear that the prevailing note of the early Erse landscape verse breathes sadness: the eternal sigh over human life; or the dirge of a race gifted and unhappy—that never has done itself justice, and hence, has rarely received it.

Let me then conclude this sketch by a hymn in a sweeter, healthier tone, with great probability assignable to Columba, the Irish saint who brought Christianity to Western Scotland, settling in the island Hii or Ia (corrupted to Iona), about the middle of the sixth century. The delicate pensiveness, the yearning intimate love of Nature which characterise the Celt are nowhere more beautifully breathed forth. The saint is standing on the rocky range which forms the south-west corner of the island, where, “on the highest point “overlooking the expanse of the western sea is the cairn . . . “which marks the spot where he is said to have ascended for “the purpose of ascertaining if he could discern from it the

"distant shores of his beloved Erin."<sup>1</sup> It would be delightful, says Columba, to be

On the pinnacle of a rock,  
That I might often see  
The face of ocean ;  
That I might see its heaving waves  
Over the wide ocean,  
When they chant music to their Father  
Upon the world's course ; . . .  
That I might hear the song of the wonderful birds,  
Source of happiness ;  
That I might hear the thunder of the crowding waves  
Upon the rocks ;  
That I might hear the roar by the side of the church  
Of the surrounding sea : . . .  
That I might see the sea-monsters,  
The greatest of all wonders ;  
That I might see its ebb and flood  
In their career. . . .  
That I might bless the Lord  
Who preserves all,  
Heaven with its countless bright orders,  
Land, strand, and flood.

<sup>1</sup> W. F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, vol. ii (1877).

## CHAPTER IX

### *LANDSCAPE IN ANGLO-SAXON POETRY*

BUT I must now resolutely turn my face to our own language in our own land. Yet the Saxon literature (as for convenience I shall name it) is but the prelude and ante-chamber to the English. And the English, indeed (if we do not concern ourselves with philology), regarded simply as literature, must in reason date from language intelligible to us all, without more at most than a glossary and a few notes. In a word, it must, mainly and practically, date from Henry VIII rather than from Edward III. But this by the way.

We may claim, it is stated,<sup>1</sup> that the German tribes whose conquests created England were before the other Teutons in poetical work. The Hero-epic was developed by our people in the sixth century. Yet the Saxon poetry does not go far ; to the contemporary Cymric or Gaelic at least, in point of style and art, it seems to me decidedly inferior. As Mr. Earle has noted, it is strongly rhetorical. The distinctly imaginative element is mainly to be found in the frequent and varied metaphors ; sometimes in the passion pervading the whole scheme of the song. In style, in metre, so far as I can judge, it must be confessed rarely or barely to rise above prose diction. Looking to our own province, seldom do we find complete similes ; the landscape is scarcely described ; the scene is indicated, rather than painted, by isolated touches. In this it may resemble the Greek poetry of Nature, but with a deeper and a sadder tone, a more personal quality. The Hellenic

<sup>1</sup> B. Ten Brink, *Early English Literature*, 1883.

sense of order, self-restraint, and beauty is, however, largely wanting.

The grim, the gloomy side of earth predominates in the scanty relics of original Saxon poetry which survive: the gaunt, gray wolf, the carrion-seeking raven; the forest with its wild inhabitants which then covered England so widely. And so the sea, as Mr. S. A. Brooke notes in his interesting *Early English Literature* (1892), appears always under the true Northern aspect: never warm, often ice-cold; never blue or green, always black, wan or murky. Thus in the mystical epic *Beowulf* of uncertain date, but early, where the hero is swimming for five days with a rival—

Flood drove us apart . . .  
Wallowing waters, coldest of weathers,  
Night waning wan; while wind from the North,  
Battling-grim, blew on us; rough were the billows.<sup>1</sup>

But *Beowulf* supplies a more characteristic and an unusually minute landscape in the picture of a desolate boundary land which was haunted by evil spirits, especially by the old sea-wolf, mother to the fiend Grendel—

They inhabit the dark land, wolf-haunted slopes, windy headlands, the rough fen-way where the mountain stream, under the dark shade of the headlands, runs down, water under land. It is not far from hence, a mile by measure, that the mere lies; over it hang groves of dead trees, a wood fast-rooted, and bend shelteringly over the water; there every night may one see a dire portent, fire on the flood. No one of the sons of men is so experienced as to know these lake depths; though the heath-ranging hart, with strong horns, pressed hard by the hounds, seeks that wooded holt, hunted from far; he will sooner give up his life, his last breath, on the bank, before he will hide his head therein. It is not a holy place. Thence the turbid wave rises up dark-hued to the clouds, when the wind stirreth up foul weather, until the air grows gloomy, the heavens weep.

What a powerfully lurid picture is this! Think for a

<sup>1</sup> In my metrical quotations I shall mainly follow the metrical renderings from the Saxon supplied by Mr. Brooke.

moment of the brilliant landscapes left us by Theocritus and the *Anthology*, so laughing, so brightly coloured ; haunted by Nymphs and Oreades in their beauty—landscapes in which the heart of man sang for joy. Or think of the landscapes of the great Psalmist, where indeed the terrible side of Nature is fully acknowledged, while yet all is imaged as God's immediate work, as lying in His hand, ready to protect man in the dangers of the sea. No more vivid contrast can be imagined : none which speaks more powerfully of the vast difference in race, in temperament, in bias of thought, between North and South.

The great Northumbrian Caedmon, the cow-herd, whose romantic story is recorded by Bede, is the first Saxon poet whose individuality is clear to us. He died in 680 A.D., and left a number of hymns mingled with legendary matter, paraphrasing parts of the Old and New Testament ; but, according to the best authorities, largely interpolated in later Saxon days. From this collection I will quote a beautiful description of the "gray-blue" dove sent forth from the Ark—

Far and wide she went, her own will she sought,  
All around she flew, nowhere rest she found,  
For the flood she might not with her flying feet  
Perch upon the land. . . .

Then the wild bird went  
For the ark a-seeking, in the even-tide,  
Over the wan wave wearily to sink,  
Hungry, to the hands of the holy man [Noah].

From the same poem I quote a striking bit of wider celestial landscape—

On the Heaven gaze, count its glorious gems,  
Count the stars of Aether that in space so pure  
Ever-glorious fairness, now so far are dealing :  
O'er the billows broad see them brightly glimmer.

The second great name in Saxon poetry is that of Cynewulf, also a Northumbrian of uncertain date, between the eighth and the eleventh centuries. His verse is partly secular, partly religious. He thus describes the fen land in which the Reed

Flute, as he calls it, grows. The Reed is personified, and speaks—

On the sand I stay'd, by the Sea-wall near,  
All beside the surge inflowing, firm I sojourn'd there  
Where I first was fashion'd. . . .  
. . . The brown-back'd billow at each break of day  
With its watery arms enwrapt me—

little dreaming then, as the poem goes on, that in time some lover would take the Reed and pipe music on it to his maiden. This pretty, natural thought may remind us of Epigrams in the Greek *Anthology*.

We have also a vivid description of the Badger—

White of throat I am, fallow gray my head ;  
and how

Through the mountain steep I make myself a street ;  
By a hidden way, through the hole of the hillside  
Lead my precious ones, my children.

It is a true, a modern feeling for the wild creature that we surely have here.

The *Andreas*, a religious poem, based on a Latin original, and belonging apparently either to Cynewulf or his school, has a very finely felt picture of our Lord on Gennesaret as told by S. Andrew on his mission to Mermedonia—

So of yore it befell that on sea-boat we  
O'er the war of waves ventured (ocean's) fords,  
Riding on the flood . . .

Billow answer'd billow,  
Wave replied to wave ; and at times uprose  
From the bosom of the foam to the bosom of the boat  
Terror o'er the Wave-ship.

Then the Lord arises from His sleep—

He rebuked the winds ;  
Sank the sea to rest : Strength of ocean-streams  
Soon did smooth become ! Then our spirit laugh'd, . . .

And the water-fear

Full of fear became, for the fear of God the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, a winter scene from the same—

Snow did bind the earth  
With the whirling winter-flakes, and the weathers grew  
Cold with savage scours of hail . . .

Frozen hard were lands  
With the chilly icicles : Shrunk the courage of the water :<sup>2</sup>  
O'er the running waters ice upraised the bridge,  
And the Sea-road shone.

The metre of these poems is similar ; they have short, unrhymed lines, the number of syllables apparently governed by accent, alliteration used for emphasis, and as a kind of link to the structure of the poem : and Mr. Brooke in his versions has attempted in some degree to preserve these peculiarities. A certain directness of style, a deep earnestness pervades them. The tendency to moralise, always characteristic of the English Muses, is very conspicuous ; and, its natural consequence, then and now, it easily led the poets into what always lies so near to the didactic, the prosaic style. Prose writing, we must remember, as in early Greece, was hardly formed as yet. Destined as we were to be nearest the Greeks in poetical literature, we, like them, sang before we spoke. Poetry, in fact, to Saxon England—gradually yet rapidly learning to take her place in the civilised European Church and Commonwealth, and to assimilate Latin culture—poetry for her main function had to teach : religion, in the widest sense, first ; next, to celebrate heroes of old or great actions of the day ; in a word, to keep alive the past and to prepare men for the future. Doubtless many rude songs of common life and pleasure existed ; but these were either never written down or have perished.

<sup>1</sup> The sense of this passage seems to be that the natural terror felt by man for the sea is itself terrified by the fear of God. The Saxon poetry not unfrequently falls into conceits and contortions of this character ; it is a phase of mind which appears congenial alike to art in its youth, and art in its decadence.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. frost stopped it from running.

Saxon literature, it should always be remembered, is but a fragment, only what survived the Danish scourge, the Norman conquest, and (perhaps most lamentable of all) the wholesale barbarous destruction of libraries by the robber reformers of the sixteenth century. Yet these fragments are, we may suppose, enough to mark the style, the aims, and the bounds of the Saxon poetry. The value of it lies mostly in its historical interest ; in the glimpses it gives of sacred and secular thought before the Conquest. It has, in a high sense, the magic of antiquity. As art, the merit of these metrical attempts cannot be rated high ; Mr. Brooke seems to me not a little to over-rate their importance, whether as poetry in itself, or as genealogically connected with our mediaeval writers. Had these ancient songs never existed, Chaucer, we may boldly say, must have been. Yet, though in a distinctly limited sense, the Saxon Makers may be called the forefathers of that vast army which we know—the long succession “from Alfred to Alfred.” Our landscape poetry, to return to my subject, is partially prefigured in the examples given. And it is needless to point out how widely their style asserts its individuality alike against Classical and Celtic song.

## CHAPTER X

### *LANDSCAPE IN ENGLISH MEDIAEVAL POETRY—CHAUCER AND HIS SUCCESSORS*

THE period of conquest, of disintegration, of transition, of renewed national unity which follows, supplies little to the Landscape of Poetry. The work then done, whilst the "Middle English" was slowly forming itself, enormous as it is, may be hence passed over. Layamon and Ormin; the Alexander, the Tristram, the Havelok; Mannyng, Rolle, Minot go by like great shadows. Nor shall I here attempt to sketch the part played by our national history in developing our poetry—a subject which, however interesting, lies outside our present attempt.

It is wellnigh another English, another literature, that the thirteenth century begins to present. Songs of that date, devoted mainly to love or to religion, frequently open with a lyrical reference to the seasons and their characteristic birds or flowers, but hardly offer the landscape as such. Here, however, we have that early and well-known carol—

Summer is y-comen in,  
Loud sing cuckoo !  
Growtheth seed and bloweth mead  
And springeth the wood now :  
Sing cuckoo ! cuckoo !  
  
Ewe bleateth after lamb,  
Loweth cow after calf ;  
Bullock starteth, buck verteth :<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Goes to harbour among the greenery, the fern. This is the current explanation. I would humbly suggest that *verteth* may be the verb *verde*, as

means "farts" v>f

Merry sing cuckoo !  
 Cuckoo ! cuckoo !  
 Well sings thou, Cuckoo ;  
 Nor cease thou never now.  
 Sing cuckoo now,  
 Sing cuckoo !

Another lyric sets forth the good effects of the Spring. I quote one stanza—

Lent is come with Love to town,  
 With blossoms and with birdës roune,<sup>1</sup>  
 That all this bliss bringeth :  
 Daisies in these dales,  
 Notes sweet of nightingales,  
 Each fowl song singeth.

Our next example, which carries us to about 1360, differs greatly from the landscape specimens just quoted, both in its length and its highly developed style—points wherein the poem named simply *Pearl*, testifies gloriously to the great advance of our literature in the later Middle Ages. It is written in West Midland dialect, and endeavours to unite the old alliterative measure with complex romance metres.

*Pearl* is the visionary lament of a father over his lost daughter Margaret, dead in early childhood, and found by him in glory within a Paradise described in the opening stanzas. Mr. I. Gollancz, of Christ's College, Cambridge, to whom we owe an admirable edition of the poem (printed from the unique MS. in the British Museum),<sup>2</sup> justly compares it to Tennyson's *In Memoriam*—an *In Memoriam* of the fourteenth century, and for its singular feeling and beauty, well deserving the prelusive quatrain written for this edition by Tennyson himself. The nameless author who was apparently born *cir.* 1330 in North-West England, may, it has been suggested, have been Ralph Strode, the "Philosophical," to whom and to Gower, Chaucer dedicated his *Troilus*.

used by Layamon in his version of Wace's *History*, written before 1200, and meaning simply *fared, went* (Ellis, *Specimens*), and the sense will simply be, "The bull starts, the buck runs."

<sup>1</sup> Round, catch.

<sup>2</sup> Published by D. Nutt (1891).

The supernatural landscape is that mainly painted in *Pearl*; which thus forms a kind of parallel to the Gardens of Love, which we noticed under Italian poetry; it is not simple Nature on which the writer's eye was fixed. Yet the poem has such freshness and charm—it so truly lifts the landscape of earth to the scenery of heaven—as to claim a place in this essay.

The Vision begins thus, apparently over the child's little grave—

To that spot which I in words set forth  
 I enter'd, within an arbour green,  
 When August's season was in height,  
 And corn is cut with sickles keen ;  
 There where my pearl erewhile had slid,  
 Shaded with herbs of fairest sheen,  
 Gillyflower, ginger, and gromwell-seed,<sup>1</sup>  
 And peonies powder'd all between.  
 But though so seemly was the scene,  
 A fairer fragrance blest the spot  
 Where dwells that worthy one, I ween,  
 My precious Pearl without a spot.

In this case I have roughly tried to give some notion of the poet's singular and graceful metre, with justice compared by Mr. Gollancz to the sonnet form in its effect. But my four rhymeless lines rhyme together in the original. We will now follow the editor's own skilful modern version—

My spirit thence sped forth into space,  
 My body lay there entranced on that mound,  
 My soul, by grace of God, had fared  
 In quest of adventure, where marvels be.  
 I knew not where that region was ;  
 I was borne, iwis, where the cliffs rose sheer ;  
 Toward a forest I set my face,  
 Where rocks so radiant were to see,  
 That none can trow how rich was the light  
 The gleaming glory that glinted therefrom,

<sup>1</sup> Chosen because its hard, round seed might be compared to a pearl.

For never a web by mortal spun  
Was half so wondrous fair.

The hill-sides there were crown'd  
With crystal cliffs full clear,  
And holts and woods, all bright with boles  
Blue as the blue of Inde,  
And trembling leaves, thick on every branch,  
As burnish'd silver shone,—  
With shimmering sheen they glisten'd,  
Touch'd by the gleam of the glades,—  
And the gravel that roll'd upon that strand  
Was precious orient pearls.  
The sun's own light had paled before  
That sight so wondrous fair.

Presently he reaches a heavenly river—

O the marvels of that wondrous stream !—  
Its banks resplendent with beryl bright,—  
Sweet music swell'd forth as its waters fell ;  
With how gentle a murmur it flow'd along !  
In the depths below lay gleaming stones ;  
As light through glass they glimmer'd and glow'd,—  
As twinkling stars in the welkin shine  
In a winter night, while the weary sleep.

Would that space allowed me to quote from the vision of the fair child herself, and the dialogue between her and the father, equally beautiful in its ancient music and in its depth of religious and human feeling. The glory and dignity of innocence, the duty and reward of submission to the will of Heaven, have never been set forth with more charm and persuasiveness. Let me hope it may lead some to make acquaintance with *Pearl*, perhaps the most purely and ideally beautiful specimen of our elder poetry which good fortune has left us.

There is probably no great poet to whom man was the proper subject for man, more exclusively than Chaucer. Hence his own voluminous work but sparingly represents Nature and landscape. Yet here and there instances occur,

slight perhaps in themselves, yet revealing the sure, swift, ever-melodious handling of this Chorus-leader of English poetry.

Our first example is very characteristic, not only of the tone of classical poetry, but of our own up to a very recent period. It is taken from the *Franklin's Tale*, and put in the mouth of the heroine Dorigen—

Eternal God ! that through thy purveyánce  
 Leadest the world by certain governance,  
 In idle,<sup>1</sup> as men say, ye nothing make ;  
 But, Lord, these grisly fiendly rockës blake,  
 That seem rather a foul confusión  
 Of work, than any fair creátion  
 Of such a perfect wisë God and a stable,  
 Why have ye wrought this work unreasonáble ?  
 For by this work, north, south, nor west, nor east,  
 There is not foster'd man, nor bird, nor beast :  
 It doth no good, to my wit, but annoyeth.<sup>2</sup>  
 See ye not, Lord, how mankind it destroyeth ?

Dorigen goes on to speak of the hundred thousand whom she fancies have been dashed against rocks and slain. This is the general aspect of the sea in our poetry till modern days. Her friends then lead her for comfort to a garden—

—May had painted with his softë showers  
 This garden full of leavës and of flowers :  
 And craft of mannë's hand so curiously  
 Arrayéd had this garden trüely,  
 That never was there garden of such price,<sup>3</sup>  
 But-if it were the very Paradise.  
 Th' odoúr of flowers, and the freshë sight,  
 Would have makëd any heartë light  
 That e'er was born, but-if too great sicknëss  
 Or too great sorrow held it in distress ;  
 So full it was of beauty with pleasánce.

Next I take a wood-scene from the "great Temple of Mars in "Thrace," thus forcibly described in the *Knight's Tale*—

<sup>1</sup> In vain.

<sup>2</sup> Works mischief.

<sup>3</sup> Of so much value unless it were . . .

First on the wall was painted a forést,  
 In which there dwelleth neither man nor beast,  
 With knotty gnarry barren treës old  
 Of stubbës sharp and hideous to behold ;  
 In which there ran a rumble and a sough,<sup>1</sup>  
 As though a storm should bursten every bough.

Another forest, obviously before Spenser's mind,<sup>2</sup> occurs in the *Parlemente of Foules*, with a garden landscape—

The builder oak ;<sup>3</sup> and eke the hardy ash ;  
 The pillar elm,<sup>4</sup> the coffer<sup>5</sup> unto carrain ;  
 The boxtree piper ;<sup>6</sup> the holm to whippë's lash ;<sup>7</sup>  
 The sailing fir ;<sup>8</sup> the cypress death to plain ;  
 The shooter yew ; the aspe<sup>9</sup> for shaftës plain ;  
 Th' olive of peace, and eke the drunken vine ;  
 The victor palm ; the laurel to divine.<sup>10</sup>

A garden saw I, full of blosmy boughës,  
 Upon a river, in a greenë mead,  
 Where as that sweetness evermore enow is,  
 With flowers whitë, blue, yellow, and red,  
 And coldë wellë streamës, nothing dead,  
 That swammë full of smallë fishes light,  
 With finnës red, and scalës silver bright.

On every bough the birdës heard I sing,  
 With voice of angel, in their harmony,  
 That busied them their birdës forth to bring ;  
 The little conies to their play gan hie ;  
 And further all about I gan espy  
 The dreadful<sup>11</sup> roe, the buck, the hart, and hind,  
 Squirrels, and beastës small, of gentle kind.

Lastly, let us examine the passage from the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, often quoted as a proof of Chaucer's

<sup>1</sup> Groaning noise.

<sup>2</sup> *Faërie Queene*, B. i, C. i.

<sup>3</sup> Used then commonly for building.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps as prop to the vine or from its mode of growth.

<sup>5</sup> Coffin for the dead.

<sup>6</sup> As used for wind instruments.

<sup>7</sup> Holly used for whip handles.

<sup>8</sup> Used for masts and spars.

<sup>9</sup> Aspen.

<sup>10</sup> For prophecy.

<sup>11</sup> Timid.

love for Nature. He says his delight in books was such that he could only quit them on a few solemn days.

—Whan that the month of May  
Is comen, and that I hear the foulës sing,  
And that the flowres ginnen for to spring,  
Farwell my booke, and my devotion.  
Now have I than<sup>1</sup> such a condition,  
That of all the flowres in the mede,  
Than love I most these flowres white and rede,  
Soch that men callen daisies in our toun ;  
To hem I have so great affectiou,  
As I sayd erst, whan comen is the May,  
That in my bedde there daweth<sup>2</sup> me no day,  
That I nam<sup>3</sup> up and walking in the mede,  
To seen this flowre agein the Sunnë spredē,  
Whan it up riseth early by the morrow,  
That blissfull sight softeneneth all my sorrow ;  
So glad am I, whan that I have presence  
Of it, to doon<sup>4</sup> all maner reverence ;  
And she that is of all flowres the flowre,  
Fulfillēd of vertue and of all honoure,  
And ever y-like<sup>5</sup> faire, and fresh of hewe,  
And I love it, and ever y-like newe,  
And ever shall, till that mine hertē die ;  
Al swere I nat,<sup>6</sup> of this I wol not lie,  
There lovēd no wight better in his life.

This is indeed a charming picture ; we seem to have the daisy not only loved for its own sake, but loved so deeply that it attracts the poet beyond all other interests. Observe, however, that in the seventh line from the last the gender of the flower changes from *it* to *she*. Now the date of the poem lies between 1385 and 1386 ; and it is in a high degree probable that the Daisy so honoured and loved is here (at any rate, concurrently) none other than the good Queen Anne (second wife to Richard II), who had at that very time befriended the poet. And Chaucer himself seems clearly to intimate this when

<sup>1</sup> Then.           <sup>2</sup> Dawneth.           <sup>3</sup> Am not.           <sup>4</sup> Do it.  
<sup>5</sup> Alike fair.       <sup>6</sup> Although I will not swear.

presently, in this Prologue, he speaks of "the gretē goodnesse of "the queen Alceste (who also undoubtedly represents Anne),<sup>1</sup>

" That turnēd was into a Dayēsyē," and who is also represented as wearing what can be best described as a *daisyfied* dress. Note also that the whole of Chaucer's supposed enthusiastic confession of love for the flower is founded on a similar passage from a poem on *La Margherite* by Froissart. The flora of mediaeval days lay mostly among common flowers of the field, or those of the garden. It is hence likely that the daisy held somewhat the same familiar place in Chaucer's fancy that it held with Wordsworth—

Sweet silent Creature !

Yet, in the main, we must here accept it as mainly symbolical. The episode, in truth, should be read as a little Romaunt, not of the Rose but of the Daisy.

Several poets who follow Chaucer's style furnish us also with landscape suggestions, often beautiful if lightly touched. From *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* I take a scene of bird-life. The minstrel in the too common conventional way is lying sleepless, and goes out in hope to hear the nightingale sing before the cuckoo—

And then I thought anon, as it was day,  
I would go somewhere to essay  
If that I might a nightingalē hear ;  
For yet had I none heard of all that year,  
And it was then the thirdē night of May.

He goes into a wood and finds there a lawn

All green and white ; was nothing ellēs seen.  
There sat I down among the fairē flowers,  
And saw the birdēs trip out of their bowers,  
There as they rested them allē the night ;  
They were so joyful of the dayēs light ;  
They began of May for to do honoúrs.  
They cond<sup>2</sup> that service all by rote ;  
There was many a lovely note !

<sup>1</sup> See Skeat's edition (1894), vol. iii, pp. xxiv, xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Conned, knew.

Some sangē loud as they had plain'd,  
And some in other manner voicē feign'd,  
And some all out with the full throat.

The feeling for Nature is admirable ; yet no proper landscape is shown ; and it is a duet between the two birds which forms the poet's main subject.

*The Flower and the Leaf*, a most graceful and delicately rendered pageant of knights and ladies, has been authoritatively assigned to some date about 1450, and is probably by a lady's hand. Although not equal to Chaucer's work in power, yet there is a tender refinement of feeling, a chivalrous note in this poem, which is less frequent in the great writer than one might wish ; Chaucer lacks *personal* loyalty to womanhood ; how unlike Spenser and Shakespeare !—There is a curious monotony or conventionality of invention in the writers of this period ; and here, again, the writer feigns that sleeplessness tempted her to a grove—

In which were oakēs great, straight as a line,  
Under the which the grass, so fresh of hue,  
Was newly sprung ; and an eight foot or nine  
Every tree well from his fellow grew,  
With branches broad, laden with leavēs new,  
That sprangen out against the sunnē sheen ;  
Some very red ; and some a glad light green ;

Which, as me thought, was right a pleasant sight.  
And eke the birdēs' songēs for to hear  
Would have rejoicēd any earthly wight ;  
And I, that could not yet, in no mannēre,  
Hearē the nightingale of<sup>1</sup> all the year,  
Full busy hearkenēd with heart and ear,  
If I her voice perceive could anywhere.

We then reach a "right pleasant arbour"

That benchēd was, and with turfēs new  
Freshly y-turf'd, whereof the greenē grass,  
So small, so thick, so short, so fresh of hue,

<sup>1</sup> Had not yet heard her during all the year.

That most like to green wool, I wot, it was ;  
 The hedge alsó, that yeden in compáss,<sup>1</sup>  
 And closed in all the greenë herbére,<sup>2</sup>  
 With sycamore was set and eglatére,<sup>3</sup>  
 Wreathéd in fere,<sup>4</sup> so well and cunningly,  
 That every branch and leaf grew by measúre.

The goldfinch and the nightingale, birds symbolical of the flower that fades and the evergreen leaf, now appear ; and the nightingale is presently found—

— At the last I gan full well espy  
 Where she sat in a fresh green laurel tree,  
 On the further side, even right by me,  
 That gave so passing a delicious smell,  
 According to<sup>5</sup> the eglantére full well.

The touches of nature here, like the song, are sweet and fresh and melodious ; like missal-illuminations, as the poetry of that age so constantly is, in their gay tints and foreground character. And in this style we may possibly trace some breath of the earlier Italian Renaissance, perhaps wafted through France to England. Note also how the poet clearly prefers the cultivated landscape to the wild—a well known almost universal preference of the mediaeval mind.

In *The Complaint of the Black Knight*, Lydgate (*cir. 1375-cir. 1460*), who has rarely received his due as a poet from modern critics,<sup>6</sup> presents a fuller, a more diffuse landscape than his predecessors, though it is still a landscape of the home-keeping character. The poet, yet again conventionally wakeful, rises to enter a wood—

Whan that the misty vapour was agone,  
 And claire and fairë was the morning,  
 The dewe also like silver in shining  
 Upon the leaves, as any baumë swete,

<sup>1</sup> Went all round.

<sup>2</sup> Arbour.

<sup>3</sup> Sweet-briar.

<sup>4</sup> Together.

<sup>5</sup> Agreeing with.

<sup>6</sup> Gray, however, whose praise is glory, has done justice to Lydgate in an admirable essay (vol. v, Aldine Ed. 1843).

Till firy Titan<sup>1</sup> with his persant<sup>2</sup> hete  
 Had driēd up the lusty licour new,  
 Upon the herbēs in the grenē mede ;

whence he presently reaches “a parke, enclosēd with a wall”—

And in I went to heare the birdēs song,  
 Which on the branches, both in plaine and vale,  
 So loud sang, that all the wood rong,<sup>3</sup>  
 Like as it should shiver in peeces smale,  
 And as me thought, that the nightingale  
 With so great might, her voice gan out wrest  
 Right as her herte for love would brest.<sup>4</sup>

This stanza, among the many praises of the nightingale in poetry, seems to me matchless in pure passion.

Lydgate has many descriptions in a style picturesque, sweet, and fluent, if not powerful; we may say that he carried out landscape painting in words more fully than any of his English contemporaries. Such is this forest scene; he reaches a bowery glade—

Full smooth and plain and lusty for to sene,  
 And soft as velvet was the yongē green :  
 Where from my horse I did alight as fast,  
 And on a bough aloft his reinē cast.  
 So faint and mate<sup>5</sup> of weariness I was,  
 That I me laid adown upon the grass,  
 Upon a brinckē, shortly for to tell,  
 Beside the river of a crystal well ;  
 And the watér, as I rehearsé can,  
 Like quickésilver in his streams y-ran,  
 Of which the gravel and the brighté stone,  
 As any gold, against the sun y-shone.

The brilliancy of Italian poetry, as Warton notes, may be felt in these latter lines.

It is remarkable that the Scotch poetry of the fifteenth

<sup>1</sup> The sun.

<sup>2</sup> Piercing.

<sup>3</sup> Rung.

<sup>4</sup> Burst.

<sup>5</sup> Sad.

century has a wealth and charm beyond that of Chaucer's English followers.

This summer of song may be reasonably ascribed to the fact that Scotland during the fifteenth century, though sorely troubled by domestic feud, was guarded from inroads, first by the diversion of English aims and English armies to France, and then by the civil war between the houses of York and Lancaster. Earliest in the new style founded by Chaucer is James I (1394-1437), whose *King's Quair (Book)*, written by 1422, was inspired by love for the Lady Joan Beaufort (who became his wife in 1424), whilst James was a prisoner in Windsor Castle. The opening stanzas are a graceful prelude, quite in Chaucer's style, describing the Castle garden—

Now was there made, fast by the Tower's wall,  
A garden fair, and in the corners set  
An arbour green, with wandés long and small  
Railéd about ; and so with treeś set  
Was all the place, and hawthorn hedges knet,  
That life<sup>1</sup> was none walking there forby,<sup>2</sup>  
That might within scarce any wight espy.

So thick the boughés met the leavés green,  
Beshaded all the alleys that were there ;  
And midst of every arbour might be seen  
The sharpé, greené, sweeté, juniper,  
Growing so fair, with branches here and there ;  
That, as it seeméd to a life without,  
The boughés spread the arbour all about.

And on the smallé greené twistis<sup>3</sup> sat  
The little sweeté nightingale, and sung  
So loud and clear the hymnés consecrat  
Of Love's use.

It is noteworthy how much the Scots dialect is here excluded. This in all probability was due, not to the fact that the young poet had forgotten his native speech, but to his aim to follow Chaucer as his classical model. But we may perhaps trace a certain close study of landscape detail which seems

<sup>1</sup> Living person.

<sup>2</sup> Past.

<sup>3</sup> Twigs.

to me to distinguish the Scotch Chaucerians from their English contemporaries.

The poem, however, presently turns to allegory: that unhappy fashion in poetry which has rendered so much mediaeval verse now unreadable, despite the true feeling which may underlie it.

William Dunbar (*cir. 1465-cir. 1530*) has a wealth in words, a fullness of meaning, a direct force in poetry, in short, which raise him above his contemporaries, and explain why he was rated by Sir W. Scott as highest among the poets of his country, the "darling of the Scottish Muse." He deals so with the then ordinary materials of song—the classical allusions which had now become common property—that they seem to regain their first freshness. Yet his command over metrical structure, his accentuation, is inferior whether to Chaucer or to James. His devout admiration of Chaucer is eloquently expressed: *Reverend Chaucer*, Dunbar calls him, the imperial flower of our language, who had won a royal triumph in poetry, far above others, as May over midnight.<sup>1</sup>

I will quote the opening stanzas of *The Thistle and the Rose*, the poem which celebrates the marriage of James IV with Margaret Tudor—

When March was with varying windés past,  
And April had, with her silvér showers,  
Ta'en leave at Nature, with an orient blast,  
And lusty May, that mother is of flowers,  
Had made the birdés to begin their hours<sup>2</sup>  
Among the tender odours red and white,  
Whose harmony it was to her delight :  
In bed at morrow sleeping as I lay,  
Methought Aurora, with her chrystal eyne  
In at the window lookéd by the day,  
And hailéd me, with visage pale and green,  
On whose hand a lark sang from the spleen,<sup>3</sup>  
"Awake, lovers, out of your slumbering,  
"See how the lusty morrow does up-spring!"

<sup>1</sup> At the end of his *Golden Terge*.

<sup>2</sup> Matins.

<sup>3</sup> Its heart.

Methought fresh May before my bed upstood,  
 In weed<sup>1</sup> depaint of many divers hue,  
 Sober, benign, and full of mansuetude,  
 In bright attire of flowers forgéd new,  
 Heavenly of colour, white, red, brown, and blue,  
 Balméd in dew, and gilt with Phoebus' beams ;  
 While all the house illuminéd of her leams.<sup>2</sup>

From a *May Day Dream* I am tempted to add a bright picture, with its graceful classical allusion, perhaps a little sentimentalised—

Full angel-like these birdés sang their hours<sup>3</sup>  
 Within their curtains green, into their bowers  
 Apparell'd white and red with bloomés sweet ;  
 Enamell'd was the field with all coloúrs ;  
 The pearly droppés shook in silver showers,  
 While all in balm did branch and leavés fleet :<sup>4</sup>  
 To part from Phoebus did Aurora greet :<sup>5</sup>—  
 Her chrystral tears I saw hang on the flowers,  
 Which he, for love, all drank up with his heat.

Gawin Douglas (*cir. 1475-1522*), in the Prologues to his very remarkable version of the *Aeneid* (said to have been executed in 1513), went beyond any other poet of the age in his power of rendering a true landscape, in regard to wealth of detail, varied imagery, and singularly spirited execution. This early art, however, has not yet always mastered the sense of proportion or of wholeness : the details of a May scene in the country are here catalogued in words rather than arranged or selected. Hence, and even more from the extreme rudeness or obscurity of the dialect employed, it is difficult to give a fair notion of the poet's great merit. But I will quote a few lines from a somewhat modernised version.<sup>6</sup>

Douglas, it will be observed, reaches a new, a modern, manner in his accentuation of words and metrical rhythms.

<sup>1</sup> Garment.

<sup>2</sup> Rays.

<sup>3</sup> Matins.

<sup>4</sup> Flow.

<sup>5</sup> Weep.

<sup>6</sup> *Early English Poetry*, selected, with notes, by H. M. Fitzgibbon, 1887: a useful little volume.

The final *e* is now mute ; but the words taken over from Latin preserve the original adjectival accent, e.g. *nocturnál*.

We begin with sunrise—

As fresh Aurore, to mighty Tithon spouse,  
Issued from her saffron bed and ivory house,  
In crimson clad and grainéd violet,  
With sanguine cape, the selvage purpurate,  
Unshut the windows of her largé hall  
Spread all with roses and full of balm royál ;  
And eke the heavenly portals chrystaline  
Upwarpés<sup>1</sup> broad, the world to illumine.  
The twinkling streamers of the orient  
Spread purple streaks with gold and azure ment,<sup>2</sup>  
Piercing the sable rampart nocturnal  
Beat down<sup>3</sup> the skye's cloudy mantle-wall.

Apollo himself, the great sun, now rises in his chariot—

The aureate vanes<sup>4</sup> of his throne soverain  
With glittering glance o'erspread the ocean,  
The largé floodés gleaming all of light  
But with one blink of his supernal sight.  
For to behold it was a glor(y) to see  
The stabled<sup>5</sup> windés and the calméd sea,  
The soft seasóun, the firmament serene,  
The calm illuminated air, and firth amene.<sup>6</sup>

And lusty Flora did her bloomés spread  
Under the feet of Phoebus' glittering steed,  
The swarded soil embroider'd with strange hues,  
Woods and forest odumbrat<sup>7</sup> with their boughs,  
Where blissful bránches, portray'd on the ground  
With shadows sheen, shew rockés rubicund,<sup>8</sup>  
Towers, turrets, kirlans,<sup>9</sup> pinnacles high  
Of kirks, castles, and ilk fair city,

<sup>1</sup> Throws open.

<sup>2</sup> Mixed.

<sup>3</sup> Dispersed the dark clouds.

<sup>4</sup> Wings.

<sup>5</sup> Quieted.

<sup>6</sup> The beautiful sea.

<sup>7</sup> Shaded.

<sup>8</sup> Red in the early sunlight.

<sup>9</sup> Battlements.

Stood painted, every fyall,<sup>1</sup> fane<sup>2</sup> and stage,<sup>3</sup>  
Upon the plain ground by their own umbrage.

In these last lines we seem to see a landscape as such, truly grasped, and brought clearly out by the light and shade of Nature.

As a contrast, take a passage from T. Warton's prose version of a winter scene—

The kite, perched on an old tree, fast by my chamber, cried lamentably, a sign of the dawning day. I rose, and half-opening my window, perceived the morning, livid, wan, and hoary; the air overwhelmed with vapour and cloud; the ground stiff, gray, and rough; the branches rattling; the sides of the hills looking black and hard with the driving blasts; the dew-drops congealed on the stubble and rind of trees; the sharp hailstones, deadly-cold, *hopping* on the thatch and the neighbouring causeway.

The landscapes through which we have here been moving are laid out much on the same model; children, fair and gay, of one family. They make no attempt to "moralise the "song"; they are frames for bright pictures of courteous Love: the *gentilezza* of early Italian songs and sonnets is in them. Yet we now clearly recognise a pleasure in describing the scenes, mostly found in the palaces and convents of the time, in which the poets personally delighted.

In this series, the rendering of Nature by Douglas marks a very distinct advance: the naïf beauty of mediaeval times which had become conventional through repetition is exchanged for a markedly broader and stronger treatment. And this, unconsciously no doubt, coincides with our arrival at one of the great crises of our literature. Already the preparations have been made for the Elizabethan poetry—the light of the Renaissance influence has risen above the horizon.

<sup>1</sup> Dome.

<sup>2</sup> I conjecture, vane.

<sup>3</sup> Story.

## CHAPTER XI

### *LANDSCAPE IN ELIZABETHAN POETRY*

THAT Wyatt (1503-1542) and Surrey (*c.* 1515-1547) are the direct ancestors of our modern poetry has been a truism from the Elizabethan time onwards. This high place they owe less to simple force and inspiration than to the style and matter of the Italian Renaissance, with some measure of its charm, which they were the first to naturalise in England : for Chaucer's brave attempt in that direction proved premature. They are *Makers*, to give them once more the old rightful name, by virtue of manner in a wide sense ; by parting from mediaevalism, to speak generally, in metres, in choice of subject, and by a style less purely national. They are also modern in choice of words ; no change in the language even approximately like those great changes during the four hundred years before their date—the death of Saxon, the growth of the mixed English—having developed itself during the same period since the sixteenth began.

Wyatt, however, really adds nothing to our own subject. His was not a mind attuned to Nature, her sweet sights and roundelayes. Surrey's soul, more gentle and more musical, has left us a charming sonnet, full of true if obvious natural fact : the title is, *Description of Spring, wherein everything renews, save only the Lover*—

The soote<sup>1</sup> season, that bud and bloom forth brings,  
With green hath clad the hill, and eke the vale.

<sup>1</sup> Sweet.

The nightingale with feathers new she sings ;  
 The turtle to her make<sup>1</sup> hath told her tale.

Summer is come, for every spray now springs,  
 The hart hath hung his old head<sup>2</sup> on the pale ;  
 The buck in brake his winter coat he flings ;  
 The fishes flete<sup>3</sup> with new repairéd scale ;

The adder all her slough away she slings ;  
 The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale ;<sup>4</sup>  
 The busy bee her honey now she mings ;<sup>5</sup>  
 Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale.<sup>6</sup>

And thus I see among these pleasant things  
 Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs !

These lines, in their simple elegance, probably record Surrey's study of Petrarch. But he also justly claims a lyric in which the poetical advance, whereof he was our chief leader and protagonist, clearly and beautifully reveals itself. The sweet, spontaneous melody, the natural images not only varied but grouped as wholes, the life we are made to feel in the creatures of Nature, and how it is parallel while opposed to humanity—all these are new, and all are distinct advances. And the landscape is unconsciously *classical* also. It shows Nature, not in the allusive, allegorical style of the Middle Ages, but looked at and painted as she is; and in that sense truly follows the Italian poets of what might be termed the middle Renaissance, Lorenzo or Poliziano. This piece is named *A Description of the restless State of the Lover when absent from the Mistress of his Heart*.<sup>7</sup> I quote the opening lines—

The Sun, when he hath spread his rays,  
 And show'd his face ten thousand ways ;

<sup>1</sup> Mate.

<sup>2</sup> Shed his horns.

<sup>3</sup> Float.

<sup>4</sup> Small.

<sup>5</sup> Mingles.

<sup>6</sup> Sorrow.

<sup>7</sup> It was printed by Tottel in the same rare book which, in 1557, first gave England the avowed poems by Wyatt and Surrey, but as by an Uncertain Author. After long hesitation, however, on comparison with the lyrics of that time, I cordially agree with those critics who ascribe it to Lord Surrey. Yet even without the name of Howard it would "smell as sweet."

Ten thousand things do then begin  
 To show the life that they are in.  
 The heaven shows lively art and hue,  
 Of sundry shapes and colours new,  
 And laughs upon the earth ; anon,  
 The earth, as cold as any stone,  
 Wet in the tears of her own kind,  
 'Gins then to take a joyful mind.  
 For well she feels that out and out  
 The sun doth warm her round about,  
 And dries her children tenderly ;  
 And shows them forth full orderly.  
 The mountains high, and how they stand,  
 The valleys, and the great main land !  
 The trees, the herbs, the towers strong,  
 The castles, and the rivers long !

Earth also sends forth her children, compared by Surrey to young choristers—

To mount and fly up in the air ;  
 Where then they sing in order fair,  
 And tell in song full merrily,  
 How they have slept full quietly  
 That night, about their mother's sides.  
 And when they have sung more besides,<sup>1</sup>  
 Then fall they to their mother's breast,  
 Whereas<sup>2</sup> they feed, or take their rest.

Then everything doth pleasure find  
 In that, that comforts all their kind.  
 No dreams do drench them of the night  
 Of foes, that would them slay, or bite,  
 As hounds, to hunt them at the tail ;  
 Or men force them through hill and dale.  
 The sheep then dreams not of the wolf :  
 The shipman forces not the gulf ;

<sup>1</sup> Surrey here follows the rational Italian practice, using as rhymes words identical in spelling but diverse in sense—a practice which Mr. Swinburne has justly revived for our benefit.

<sup>2</sup> Where.

The lamb thinks not the butcher's knife  
Should then bereave him of his life.  
For when the sun doth once run in,  
Then all their gladness doth begin ;  
And then their skips, and then their play :  
So falls their sadness then away.

After this we pass to a picture of Love in Absence, rarely equalled in our poetry for its exquisitely simple phrases, for the delicate homely depth and purity of its passion—

It gives a very echo to the seat  
Where Love is throned.

But this lies beyond my narrower province.

Great poet as Spenser was, yet his landscape disappoints us. It seems to form an exception—we might perhaps call it a reaction—from the general quality of the English Nature-poetry we have been surveying. Spenser's distinctive note, good critics have observed, is “his remoteness from every day “life”; the “marvellous independence and true imaginative “absence of all particular space or time” in the *Faërie Queene*.<sup>1</sup> Hence his landscape approaches rather to that sweet, but less varied and expressive conventional semi-classic style, frequent in the later Italian poetry.

Taking first, with honour due, his great poem, we may first note that Spenser's similes from nature are rare and slight; they seem to lack conviction. It is buildings, indeed, which he describes much more at length than landscape, e.g. *Castle Joyous*, or that of *Alma*, or *Busyrane's*; or the Palace of Love, where *Be bold* was written over the door. In these descriptions Spenser's chief object apparently has been to bring in a gallery of endless tapestried pictures devoted to antique amorous legend.

But if natural description as such be rare in the wilderness of his allegory, short vignettes—yet picturesque I should call them, rather than pictures—are frequent; brilliant in colour, and all set off by that unceasing music of words which seems to run, like Pactolus of old, over golden sands. Such

<sup>1</sup> S. T. Coleridge.

are the Cave of Despair, the House of Sleep, Aurora quitting Tithonus : the Garden of Proserpine, with its golden apples : the Wandering Islands, the Bower of Cymochles, the Forest where Timias is cured. One or two examples I will quote. The first is from Cymochles's voyage with the wanton Phaedria over the Idle Lake in her "Gondolay" to an island of pleasure—

It was a chosen plot of fertile land,  
Amongst wide waves set, like a little nest,  
As if it had by Nature's cunning hand  
Been choicely pickéd out from all the rest,  
And laid forth for ensample of the best :  
No dainty flower or herb that grows on ground,  
No arboret with painted blossoms drest  
And smelling sweet, but there it might be found  
To bud out fair, and throw her sweet smells all around.<sup>1</sup>

And this is followed by a song of Phaedria, "more sweet  
"than any bird on bough"—

Behold, O man ! that toilsome pains dost take,  
The flowers, the fields, and all that pleasant grows,  
How they themselves do thine ensample make,  
Whiles nothing-envious nature them forth throws  
Out of her fruitful lap ; how no man knows,  
They spring, they bud, they blossom fresh and fair,  
And deck the world with their rich pompous shows ;  
Yet no man for them taketh pains or care,  
Yet no man to them can his careful pains compare.

Even more alluring is the bower of Acrasia (Intemperance) herself ; Spenser's *Garden of Love*, in which not only the very spirit of the Renaissance is embodied, but some of Tasso's most musical Armida verses are introduced, with hardly a note lost of the Italian "linkéd sweetness long drawn out"—

The whiles some one did chant this lovely lay :  
Ah ! see, whoso fair thing dost fain<sup>2</sup> to see,

<sup>1</sup> Spenser's peculiar fancies in spelling—eyesores even from his own age—  
are here omitted.

<sup>2</sup> Wish.

In springing flower the image of thy day.  
 Ah ! see the Virgin Rose, how sweetly she  
 Doth first peep forth with bashful modesty,  
 That fairer seems the less ye see her may.  
 Lo ! see soon after how more bold and free  
 Her bared bosom she doth broad display ;  
 Lo ! see soon after how she fades and falls away.<sup>1</sup>

Famous as the *Shepherd's Calender*, when published, at once became, it has but a vague, and often unreal, pastoral character. Nor does *Daphnaida*, though an elegy unsurpassed even by Tasso in its exquisitely sustained melody and tenderness of feeling, supply anything to our subject. But Spenser's paraphrase of the Vergilian poem, the *Gnat*, supplies a pastoral scene, which may be taken as an example of his style at its best in this mode of poetry—

The very nature of the place, resounding  
 With gentle murmur of the breathing air,  
 A pleasant bower with all delight abounding  
 In the fresh shadow did for them prepare,  
 To rest their limbs with weariness redounding.  
 For first the high Palm trees, with branches fair,  
 Out of the lowly valleys did arise,  
 And high shoot up their heads into the skies.

But the small Birds, in their wide boughs embowering,  
 Chanted their sundry tunes with sweet consent ;  
 And under them a silver Spring forth pouring  
 His trickling streams, a gentle murmur sent ;

<sup>1</sup> Tasso is now so neglected, not in England only, that I cannot resist doing him the justice to set one of his stanzas by Spenser's—

Cosi trapassa al trapassar d' un giorno  
 De la vita mortale il fiore e 'l verde :  
 Nè perchè faccia indietro April ritorno,  
 Si rinfiora ella mai, nè si rinverde.  
 Cogliam la rosa in su 'l mattino adorno  
 Di questo dì, che tosto il seren perde :  
 Cogliam d' Amor la rosa, amiamo hor, quando  
 Esser si puote riamato amando.

It is no good sign for a country's art—poetical or pictorial—when the worship of Beauty is sneered at as a superstition.

Thereto the frogs, bred in the slimy scowring  
Of the moist moors, their jarring voices bent,  
And shrill grasshoppers chirpéd them around ;  
All which the airy Echo did resound.

Spenser, in his *Muiopotmos*, has admirably drawn the Butterfly itself who forms the hero of that entangled story ; but the natural details, flowers especially, are still given by way of catalogue, like the list of birds in the *Epithalamion*—a fashion which only the genius of Shakespeare or Milton could inspire with poetical charm.

In *Colin Clout*, as a piece from real life the ablest and most interesting poem which Spenser has left us, the place of landscape is filled in high allegorical style by a record of the Loves of the Rivers around his Irish home. But when he has to describe his voyage to England, all the poet awakes, and we have a picture of the sea, and of a vast royal ship of the day, which has never been surpassed in English literature. Yet even here it is not the old national love of ocean, but the old classic terror which prevails—

So to the sea we came ; the sea, that is  
A world of waters heapéd up on high,  
Rolling like mountains in wide wilderness,  
Horrible, hideous, roaring with hoarse cry.  
“ And is the sea ” (quoth Cordon) “ so fearful ? ”  
“ Fearful much more ” (quoth he) “ than heart can fear :  
“ Thousand wild beasts with deep mouths gaping direful  
“ Therein still wait poor passengers to tear.  
“ Who life doth loathe, and longs death to behold,  
“ Before he die, already dead with fear,  
“ And yet would live with heart half stony cold,  
“ Let him to sea, and he shall see it there.”

Yet bold men dare to embark—

For, as we stood there waiting on the strand,  
Behold ! an huge great vessel to us came,  
Dancing upon the waters back to land,  
As if it scorn'd the danger of the same ;  
Yet was it but a wooden frame and frail,

Gluéd together with some subtle matter.  
 Yet had it arms and wings, and head and tail,  
 And life to move itself upon the water.  
 Strange thing ! how bold and swift the monster was,  
 That neither cared for wind, nor hail, nor rain,  
 Nor swelling waves, but thorough them did pass  
 So proudly, that she made them roar again.  
 The same aboard us gently did receive,  
 And without harm us far away did bear,  
 So far that land, our mother, us did leave,  
 And nought but sea and heaven to us appear.

With what splendid landscape scenes might Spenser have endowed us, had he thus trusted himself to himself more freely !

In contrast with Spenser's general Renaissance gaiety of style may be placed *The Vale of Tears*, a remarkable poem by the martyred Robert Southwell (1560-95), tinged with the gloom of a deeply meditative, deeply penitential spirit, and almost modern in its romantic picturesqueness—

A Vale there is, enwrapt with dreadful shades,  
 Which thick<sup>1</sup> of mournful pines shrouds from the sun,  
 Where hanging cliffs yield short and dumpish<sup>2</sup> glades,  
 And snowy floods with broken streams do run. . . .

Where ears of other sound can have no choice  
 But various blustering of the stubborn wind,  
 In trees, and caves, in straits, with diverse noise,  
 Which now doth hiss, now howl, now roar by kind. . . .

And, in the horror of this fearful quire,  
 Consists the musick of this doleful place :  
 All pleasant birds their tunes from thence retire,  
 Where none but heavy notes have any grace. . . .

The pines, thick set, high grown, and ever green,  
 Still clothe the place with shade and mourning veil ;  
 Here, gaping cliff, there moss-grown plain is seen :  
 Here hope doth spring, and there again doth quail.

<sup>1</sup> Seemingly used for *thicket*.

<sup>2</sup> Gloomy.

Huge, massive stones, that hang by tickle<sup>1</sup> stay,  
Still threaten foul, and seem to hang in fear :  
Some wither'd trees, ashamed of their decay,  
Beset with green, are forced gray coats to wear. . . .

To plaining thoughts the vale a rest may be,  
To which from worldly joys they may retire,  
Where Sorrow springs from water, stone, and tree,  
Where every thing with mourners doth conspire.

The delightful Elizabethan songs for music present us with those sweet glimpses of English landscape—that scenery, which our lays of love or country life, as it were necessarily demand. This was an age when art in poetry was with us at its highest, in its most instinctive phase ; when it seemed hardly possible for the humblest song writer not to give melody and simple grace to his lyric,—unconsciously, as the birds themselves in England. A parallel period, with similar results, is familiar to us in the Florentine painters of the fifteenth century—Lippi, Angelico, Botticelli, Credi, Raphael in his “heaven taught” youth. Thus, in our Elizabethan pictures, the Spring, the flowers, the song-birds, Day and Night, flocks and fountains, shade and sunshine, each is sure to be given in its right key, each adds its note of freshness and suggestive charm. But these vignettes, redolent of “pure deliciousness,” must be read in their place, subordinate to that human interest which, just as in the Greek *Anthology*, is always dominant.

Yet the temptation to give a few of these eminently English Epigrams must not be denied. Thus, with a beautiful “Asclepiad” refrain from the *Arcadia*,<sup>2</sup> sadly sings a hermit—

You woods, in you the fairest Nymphs have walk'd,  
Nymphs at whose sights all hearts did yield to love :  
You woods, in whom dear lovers oft have talk'd,  
How do you now a place of mourning prove ?  
Wanstead ! my Mistress saith this is the doom :

<sup>1</sup> Slight, wavering.

<sup>2</sup> The prose of Sidney's *Arcadia*, despite its wearying euphemism, has some charming scenes from Nature. But the verse scattered through the book offers little for our purpose, and is generally disappointing.

Thou art love's child-bed, nursery, and tomb.  
 O sweet woods ! the delight of solitariness !  
 O how much do I love your solitariness !

This melancholy key is however comparatively rare ; the English Arcady is bright and joyous with (one would fain say) an almost Italian sunshine. It has always fewer refusals than kisses—

Lady, the birds right fairly  
 Are singing ever early :  
 The lark, the thrush, the nightingale,  
 The make-sport cuckoo and the quail.  
 These sing of Love ! then why sleep ye ?  
 To love your sleep it may not be.

Whither so fast ? see how the kindly flowers  
 Perfume the air, and all to make thee stay :  
 The climbing wood-bine, clipping<sup>1</sup> all these bowers  
 Clips thee likewise for fear thou pass away ;  
 Fortune our friend, our foe will not gainsay.  
 Stay but awhile, Phoebe<sup>2</sup> no tell-tale is ;  
 She her Endymion, I'll my Phoebe kiss.

Coming now to the lyrics interspersed through the great drama of that age, we have Nash's familiar song—

Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king ;  
 Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,  
 Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,  
 Cuckoo, jug, jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo.

In a more learned style, yet permeated as it were by the very spirit of the moonlight, is Ben Jonson's (1574-1637) noble *Hymn to Diana*—

Queen, and huntress, chaste and fair,  
 Now the sun is laid to sleep,  
 Seated in thy silver chair,  
 State in wonted manner keep :  
 Hesperus entreats thy light,  
 Goddess excellently bright.

<sup>1</sup> Embracing.

<sup>2</sup> The Moon.

In Fletcher's (1576-1625) *Faithful Shepherdess* we find a few sweet pastoral lines, fresh and musical, and free from the common conventionality of the style. Such is an evening scene—

Shepherds all, and maidens fair,  
 Fold your flocks up, for the air  
 'Gins to thicken, and the sun  
 Already his great course hath run.  
 See the dew-drops how they kiss  
 Every little flower that is,  
 Hanging on their velvet heads,  
 Like a rope of crystal beads :  
 See the heavy clouds low falling,  
 And bright Hesperus down calling  
 The dead Night from under ground ;  
 At whose rising mists unsound,  
 Damps and vapours fly apace,  
 Hovering o'er the wanton face  
 Of these pastures, where they come,  
 Striking dead both bud and bloom :  
 Therefore, from such danger lock  
 Every one his lovéd flock.

A river-god's charm-song to Amoret has always seemed to me a singularly perfect specimen of the equably balanced music attainable, yet rarely attained, by the difficult trochaic metre (tetrameter catalectic), mixed with iambic lines, common at that period—

Do not fear to put thy feet  
 Naked in the river sweet ;  
 Think not leech, or newt, or toad,  
 Will bite thy foot, when thou hast trod ;  
 Nor let the water rising high,  
 As thou wad'st in, make thee cry  
 And sob ; but ever live with me,  
 And not a wave shall trouble thee !

It is a sadder note we hear in another song by Fletcher, wherein he welcomes

Fountain-heads, and pathless groves,  
Places which pale passion loves !  
Moonlight walks, when all the fowls  
Are warmly housed, save bats and owls !  
A midnight bell, a parting groan !  
These are the sounds we feed upon ;  
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley ;  
Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.

Here we begin to feel the romantic spirit—pleasing, if in truth somewhat exaggerated in its imaginings,—the more modern sentiment, which finds in Nature a distinct, perhaps we might say, a purposed and intentional response, if unconsciously given, to human requirements : an echo of the heart.

Shakespeare's vast and varied genius, on the one hand, makes all attempt to criticise him dangerous ; he should ever be approached on one's knees :—whilst again, the similarly vast and varied amount of writing which he has called forth invites brevity from one who has little or nothing to add. It is in the landscape diffused through his plays that Shakespeare most distinctly shows his splendid power. But we will first look for it in the narrative poems of his youth and in his sonnets.

The *Venus and Adonis*, artificial and cold, despite its wealth of imagery, wakens to life when the poet paints the horse, the boar, the hare, the uprising of the lark. And we may say the same of the sun-burst, "rushing from forth a "cloud," in the *Lucrece*. These pictures are really, in each case, outside the story ; but in them we may already see what Johnson<sup>1</sup> knew, that Shakespeare "was an exact surveyor of "the inanimate [non-human] world ; his descriptions have "always some peculiarities, gathered by contemplating things "as they really exist ;" reality transformed into the ideal.

The strange morbid passion of the *Sonnets* has naturally given larger scope for touches of landscape, exquisitely true in themselves, and reflecting the many movements of the distracted soul. Yet the charm, I think, lies rather in the almost super-

<sup>1</sup> *Preface to the Plays*, 1765.

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natural beauty of the language than in novelty of insight into the phenomena described. As examples, I will simply name

Lo ! in the orient when the gracious light . . .

(S. VII.)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day . . .

(S. XVIII.)

Full many a glorious morning have I seen . . .

(S. XXXIII.)

With the group on Winter, Spring, and Flowers, S. xcvi-*xcix*. Two quotations only will I allow myself. In the first Shakespeare has used Nature as a counterpart to human passion ; the second is noteworthy as published when he was only in his forty-fourth year, and probably written some time earlier—

The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,

Though to itself it only live and die ;

But if that flower with base infection meet,

The basest weed outbraves his dignity :

For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds ;

Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

That time of year thou mayst in me behold

When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang

Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,

Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

In me thou see'st the twilight of such day

As after sunset fadeth in the west,

Which by and by black night doth take away,

Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire

That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,

As the death-bed whereon it must expire

Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.

This thou perceiv st, which makes thy love more strong,

To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

May I allow myself to say,—the world's literature has little to show equalling these lines for their united force and delicacy.

Shakespeare's drama, like the first-class drama at all times, can offer but small scope for landscape. The playwrights of that date fill this blank by imagination; we by scenery. Here, however, we find what was Shakespeare's contribution to Nature in poetry. We might define this as the absolute union between the human emotions of the moment and the landscape, together with the astonishing power of suggesting it at once by "jewels five words long." This union of the figures with the ground, if I may apply to poetry the phrase of Sir J. Reynolds on painting, is one of the rarest of all achievements. It will be enough to recall the respective comments by Lady Macbeth and by Duncan, as the fated king enters the treacherous Thane's castle; the crowing of the cock and the sunrise in the opening scene of *Hamlet*; the wild storm-beaten heath in *Lear*; the wounded stag in Arden; the flowers that Proserpina let fall; and those which garlanded Ophelia, as she wandered where the willow grew that showed

his hoar leaves in the glassy stream,  
When down her weedy trophies and herself  
Fell in the weeping brook.

Longer examples, yet always in strict accord with the situation, are Prospero's narrative of his magical powers: the disastrous summer described by Titania: the orchard scene in *Romeo*.

Yet the short lyrics gave Shakespeare perhaps the best opportunity for the landscape vignette. We have the rustic songs

When daisies pied and violets blue . . .

It was a lover and his lass . . .

And see how the key of each poem (to take a metaphor from music) is given, whilst the landscape is suggested, in the single lines

Under the greenwood tree . . .

Blow, blow, thou winter wind . . .

and similarly how the sea pervades as with its odour the

Full fathom five thy father lies . . .  
 just as the great Webster's  
 Call for the robin red-breast and the wren . . .  
 as Charles Lamb said, is "of the earth earthy." Or, lastly, with what magic does Shakespeare transport us to the fairy landscape—

Where the bee sucks, there suck I . . .  
 Come unto these yellow sands . . .  
 Over hill, over dale . . .

Thus in *Midsummer-Night's Dream*—

You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
 Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen ;  
 Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,  
 Come not near our fairy queen.  
 Philomel, with melody  
 Sing in our sweet lullaby ; . . .  
 Weaving spiders, come not here :  
 Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence !  
 Beetles black, approach not near ;  
 Worm nor snail, do no offence.

Compare this with the clownish realism of Bottom's ditty in the same play—

The ousel cock so black of hue,  
 With orange-tawny bill,  
 The throstle with his note so true,  
 The wren with little quill,<sup>1</sup>—  
 The finch, the sparrow and the lark,  
 The plain-song cuckoo gray,  
 Whose note full many a man doth mark,  
 And dares not answer nay.

These are mere hints—flying, insufficient touches. But Shakespeare, of all poets, is most emphatically his own best commentator.

<sup>1</sup> Song-voice : So, "mine oaten quill." —*Colin Clout*.

## CHAPTER XII

### *LANDSCAPE POETRY UNDER THE STUART KINGS*

SOME lesser poets who cross the boundary between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may now be taken. They show how, as the early Elizabethan impulse waned, new directions gradually opened for landscape treatment.

Ben Jonson, in his *Forest*, has a really full description, the earliest of the kind known to me, of Penshurst, the garden and the park ; in this sense making a real advance. But the treatment is prosaic—the art of selecting and poetising details has not been here attained.

Alexander Hume, a Scotsman of this age, in a volume of *Hymns* (published in 1599), has left us a picture singularly modern both in its skilful versification and its clearly defined landscape. It is a summer scene, which, in the Latinised Scots diction still prevalent at the time, he calls the *Day Estival*.<sup>1</sup> It opens with early dawn—

The shadow of the earth anon  
Removes and drawis by,

Syne in the east, when it is gone  
Appears a clearer sky. . . .

The time so tranquil is and clear,  
That nowhere shall ye find,  
Save on a high and barren hill,  
An air of passing wind.

All trees and simples, great and small,  
That balmy leaf do bear,

<sup>1</sup> We have had an earlier example of this fancy in Gawin Douglas.

Than they were painted on a wall,  
No more they move or stir. . . .

What pleasure, then, to walk and see  
End-lang a river clear,  
The perfect form of every tree  
Within the deep appear.

Michael Drayton (1563-1631), one of our most fluently fertile versifiers, has left some *Pastorals*, so quick and airy in touch, so attractive in feeling, that it is vexing to find how completely the landscape which he saw and must have enjoyed was silenced or exiled from his poetry by the mere conventionalities of pseudo-classicalism. Witness these lines from *Sirena*—

The verdant meads are seen,  
When she doth view them,  
In fresh and gallant green  
Straight to renew them ;  
And every little grass  
Broad itself spreadeth,  
Proud that this bonny lass  
Upon it treadeth :  
Nor flower is so sweet  
In this large cincture,  
But it upon her feet  
Leaveth some tincture.

Presently we find how, when Sirena looks forth at night, the stars stand “fearfully blazing”—

As wondering at her eyes,  
With their much brightness,  
Which so amaze the skies,  
Dimming their brightness.

This exaggerated, unreal mode of thought is of too frequent occurrence in our poetry. Can he have felt true passion who thus paints his lady love? or, mayhap, was She pleased by it?

Drayton, however, deserves praise for another landscape poem, the plan of which, perhaps, is wholly original and unique

in literature—the giant *Polyolbion* (1612-22), a picture of England and Wales filling thirty vast *Songs* in rhyming Alexandrines, after the French fashion. One may doubt whether any human power could animate a mass so huge and heterogeneous ; it is to Drayton's praise that, so far as my incursions into this wilderness have gone, he maintains a level, monotonous indeed, yet above prose. The expedient, however, by which he contrives this result, unhappily for his readers—once, it is said, numerous—is to personify every stream or hill, plain or wood. Yet it is a truly affectionate interest in each natural feature of his country in turn to which he thus gives utterance. A few lines taken at random from this *Gazetteer* in rhyme may suffice to do justice to a writer whom my subject could not fairly neglect. The first example describes Lundy Island off the south-west coast of Devon—

This Lundy is a nymph to idle toys inclined ;  
And, all on pleasure set, doth wholly give her mind  
To see upon her shores her fowl and conies fed,  
And wantonly to hatch the birds of Ganymede.<sup>1</sup>  
Of traffic or return she never taketh care ;  
Not provident of pelf, as many islands are :  
A lusty black-brow'd girl, with forehead broad and high,  
That often had bewitch'd the sea-gods with her eye.<sup>2</sup>

The next scene is on the summit of Skiddaw, “of the Cambrian hills the highest,” and

Most like Parnassus self that is supposed to be,  
Having a double head, as hath that sacred mount.

Skiddaw is hence emboldened to speak—

The rough Hibernian sea I proudly overlook,  
Amongst the scatter'd rocks, and there is not a nook,  
But from my glorious height into its depth I pry,  
Great hills far under me, but as my pages lie ;  
And when my helm of clouds upon my head I take,  
At very sight thereof, immediately I make

<sup>1</sup> Eagles.

<sup>2</sup> Song IV.

The inhabitants about tempestuous storms to fear,  
And for fair weather look, when as my top is clear ;  
Great Fourness mighty Fells I on my south survey :  
So likewise on the north, Albania makes me way.<sup>1</sup>

And so forth. Yet to this singular writer we owe not only the noble ballad of *Agincourt*, not only also those splendid lines upon Marlowe which are one of the finest tributes ever offered by poet to poet, but that enchanting sonnet of absolute first-rate beauty—a praise how rare !—worthy of Shakespeare, yet essentially unlike his style—

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part . . .

George Wither (1588-1667), in an Eclogue (1615), has a pretty thanksgiving to Poetry, who gives him pleasure—

Through the meanest object's sight,  
By the murmur of a spring,  
Or the least boughs rustlëing ;  
By a daisy, whose leaves spread  
Shut when Titan goes to bed ;  
Or a shady bush or tree,  
She could more infuse in me,  
Than all Nature's beauties can  
In some other wiser man.

The seventeenth century, we have remarked, was a time of new attempts—a larger range of natural phenomena was embraced by landscape poetry. I quote two short illustrative passages. Donne, in his powerful way, describing a primrose-covered hill, says—

—Where their form and their infinity  
    Make a terrestrial galaxy,  
        As the small stars do in the sky.

Carew, again (*cir.* 1589—*cir.* 1639), in a *Pastoral Dialogue*, has a noteworthy sky scene: the shepherd tells his Love it is dawning, they must part; she replies—

<sup>1</sup> *Albania*, Scotland, Song XXX.

Those streaks of doubtful light usher not day,  
 But show my sun must set ; no morn  
 Shall shine till thou return :  
 The yellow planets, and the gray  
 Dawn, shall attend thee on thy way.

The truth to Nature, the sense of a sympathy between her changes and human emotion, surprise one in this courtly poet ; and how beautifully does the position of *gray* emphasise the dominant feature of early dawning ! Note also here how atmospheric effects are rendered ; how (as in the lines from Donne) the stars are particularised. These modern details are doubtless due to that advance of astronomy during this period, by which even Milton was but half convinced.

So Giles Fletcher, in his *Christ's Victory* (1610), describes a solar eclipse—the phenomenon which, centuries before, had startled Pindar into one of his most splendid lyrical outbursts<sup>1</sup>—

As when the cheerful sun, elamping<sup>2</sup> wide,  
 Glads all the world with his uprising ray,  
 And woos the widow'd Earth afresh to pride,  
 And paints her bosom with the flowery May,  
 His silent sister steals him quite away,  
 Wrapt in a sable cloud, from mortal eyes ;  
 The hasty stars at noon begin to rise,  
 And headlong to his early roost the sparrow flies :  
 But soon as he again dishadow'd is,  
 Restoring the blind world his blemish'd sight,  
 As though another day were newly ris,  
 The cozen'd birds busily take their flight,  
 And wonder at the shortness of the night.

Fletcher has given us a magic garden fresh in its idea, tender in touch. A snowy hill is seen, and then—

All suddenly the hill his snow devours,  
 In lieu whereof a goodly garden grew,  
 As if the snow had melted into flowers,  
 Which their sweet breath in subtle vapours threw.

The garden was beyond Ida or Hybla in beauty—

<sup>1</sup> Ἀκτης Ἀελιοῦ . . . (Bergk, *Frag.* 74).

<sup>2</sup> Lighting up.

For sweet Variety herself did throw  
 To every bank ; here all the ground she dyed  
 In lily white ; there pinks eblazéd wide  
 And damask'd all the earth ; and here she shed  
 Blue violets, and there came roses red :  
 And every sight the yielding sense as captive led.

The garden like a lady fair was cut,  
 That lay as if she slumber'd in delight,  
 And to the open skies her eyes did shut.

But it is all the bower of Vain-delight, like that of Armida. These fine fancies, such as even Spenser, Fletcher's master, does not offer, prove the rapid growth of our landscape in poetry. But, indeed, this whole poem has a rapture, an ecstasy of triumphant song, a holy passion, rare in any literature.

With Fletcher we may name the deep-thinking Platonist Henry More (1614-87), author of a series of poems on the Soul. He also has fine touches of true Nature, loved for her own sake : single lines of enviable music :—

Thus sing I to cragg'd cliffs, and hills,  
 To sighing winds, to murmuring rills,  
 To wasteful woods, to empty groves ;  
 Such things as my dear mind most loves.

Or he sees—

Fresh varnish'd groves, tall hills, and gilded clouds  
 Arching an eyelid for the glaring Morn :  
 Fair cluster'd buildings which our sight so crowds  
 At distance, with high spires to heaven yborne ;  
 Vast plains with lowly cottages forlorn,  
 Rounded about with the low wavering sky.<sup>1</sup>

It is a modern note of introspection which we hear in such lines ; or, once more, he tells how it is

No pains, but pleasure, to do the dictates dear  
 Of inward living nature : What doth move  
 The Nightingale to sing so sweet and clear,

<sup>1</sup> *Psychathanasia*, Book III, canto i.

The Thrush, or Lark, that, mounting high above,  
 Chants her shrill notes to heedless ears of corn  
 Heavily hanging in the dewy Morn.

As we have admitted the birds as elements in the landscape—how, indeed, could one bear to exclude them?—let me here add a pretty lyric, original in tone and deeply felt, by George Daniel of Beswick (1616-56). *Poeta vere ignotus* he may claim to be; his verse having lain in manuscript till 1878<sup>1</sup>—

Poor bird! I do not envy thee;<sup>2</sup>  
 Pleased in the gentle melody  
 Of thy own song.

Let crabbéd winter silence all  
 The wingéd quire; he never shall  
 Chain up thy tongue:  
 Poor Innocent!

When I would please myself, I look on thee,  
 And guess some sparks of that felicity,  
 That self-content.

When the bleak face of winter spreads  
 The earth, and violates the meads  
 Of all their pride;

When sapless trees and flowers are fled  
 Back to their causes,<sup>3</sup> and lie dead  
 To all beside;

I see thee set,  
 Bidding defiance to the bitter air  
 Upon a wither'd spray; by cold made bare  
 And drooping yet. . . .

Poor Redbreast, carol out thy lay,  
 And teach us mortals what to say.

Here cease the quire  
 Of airy choristers; no more  
 Mingle your notes, but catch a store

<sup>1</sup> When it was fully and carefully edited (100 copies) by Dr. Grosart, whose many labours towards the revival of our early poets in complete issues have too seldom met a grateful reward.

<sup>2</sup> Regard with an invidious glance.

<sup>3</sup> First elements of growth.

From her sweet lyre :—

You are but weak,

Mere summer chanters ; you have neither wing  
Nor voice, in winter. Pretty Redbreast ! sing  
What I would speak !

A change indeed is here from the sunny Elizabethan days ! Puritanism, may be, with its Dark Age renewed, overglooming England.<sup>1</sup> Botany has come into being, with early science (Stan. ii. 4, 5) ; the lines move with a thoughtful gravity united to close observance of Nature, which might have charmed Wordsworth.

William Browne of Tavistock (1590—*cir.* 1645) either wanted power to condense, or did injustice to a pretty talent by fluency “long drawn out,” by want of taste and of proportion. His natural descriptions are apt to be in the old catalogue fashion ; as if determined to outdo Chaucer or Spenser, he gives twenty-six lines to enumerate the trees in an imagined forest. Yet amongst his wearisome shepherd tales we have occasional glimpses of true landscape. Thus a river is blessed by the Water-god ; shepherds are to make offerings—

And may thy flood have seignory  
Of all floods else ; and to thy fame  
Meet greater springs, yet keep thy name.  
May never evet,<sup>2</sup> nor the toad,  
Within thy banks make their abode !  
Taking thy journey from the sea,  
May'st thou ne'er happen in thy way  
On nitre or on brimstone mine,  
To spoil thy taste ! . . .

. . . . Let no man dare  
To spoil thy fish, make lock or ware,  
But on thy margent still let dwell  
Those flowers which have the sweetest smell.  
And let the dust upon thy strand  
Become like Tagus' golden sand.

<sup>1</sup> G. Davies was a faithful yet a just-minded Royalist.

<sup>2</sup> Newt.

Let as much good betide to thee,  
As thou hast favour show'd to me.

Milton, one sees, has had these lines (published 1613-16) before him, and glorified them into Theocritean beauty in his *Comus* song—

Virgin daughter of Locrine . . .

Browne's *Shepherd's Pipe* has some pleasing ditties, musical and gay, but no country scenes which abide with us. We see in him the fading of the Elizabethan impulse; as with Marini in the *Adone*, the melodious diffuseness, not without conventionality, of a great but declining poetry.

Later on Charles Cotton (1630-87) has left an allegorical picture of Winter, much admired by Wordsworth—full of life and invention, if not highly poetical; it already prepares the way for Thomson.

William Drummond of Hawthornden (1585-1649) reverted by his own choice to Italian models, and hence was apt to injure his sweet musical verse with mythological admixture. His landscape is generalised: Hawthornden and its lovely scenery have no distinct place in it. But the passion which burned in his heart was true and tender as Petrarch's; and this has given a vivifying power, a peculiar colour to his descriptions. Such is the sunrise painted in one of his rare moments of hopeful love—

Phoebus, arise,  
And paint the sable skies  
With azure, white, and red;

The nightingales thy coming each-where sing;  
Make an eternal spring,  
Give life to this dark world which lieth dead;  
Spread forth thy golden hair  
In larger locks than thou wast wont before,  
And, emperor like, decore  
With diadem of pearl thy temples fair.

The winds all silent are,  
 And Phoebus in his chair,  
 Ensaffroning sea and air,  
 Makes vanish every star :  
 Night like a drunkard reels  
 Beyond the hills to shun his flaming wheels ;  
 The fields with flowers are deck'd in every hue,  
 The clouds bespangle with bright gold their blue :  
 Here is the pleasant place,  
 And every thing, save her, who all should grace.

So again to his early lost Love—

I die, dear life, unless to me be given  
 As many kisses as the spring hath flowers,  
 Or as the silver drops of Iris' showers,  
 Or as the stars in all-embracing heaven.

This landscape, so dyed with human love, so impassioned in its tone, may recall Vergil, in his *Alexis*; Collins, in his *Ode to Liberty*; Tennyson, in *Maud*. But it is singular in its own age; it comes like a new colour on the artist's palette. Similar imaginative power appears in Drummond's noble sonnet on S. John Baptist—

The last and greatest herald of heaven's King . . .

This has the severity of a design by Andrea Mantegna. And small phrases often occur, keenly close to Nature—

Lightning through the welkin hurl'd,  
 That scores with flame the way :  
 New doth the sun appear ;  
 The mountains' snows decay,  
 Crown'd with frail flowers forth comes the baby year.

Drummond is so little known that I would willingly dwell longer on his poetry. The *Italianate* manner which he adopted has, I think, concealed from recognition his very remarkable personality.

In Andrew Marvell (1621-78), one of the most original poets of the Stuart period, the new tentative features of the age

in poetry, again, are clearly marked. The lyrical work belonging to his early life has often passages of imaginative quality, equally strong and delicate. If we exclude Milton, no one of that time touches sweeter or nobler lyrical notes ; but he is singularly unequal ; he flies high, but is not long on the wing. The characteristic Elizabethan smoothness of unbroken melody was now failing ; the fanciful style of Donne, the seventeenth century *concetti*, seized on Marvell too strongly, and replaced in him the earlier mythological landscape characteristic of the Renaissance.

Thus, in his long description of Appleton House in Yorkshire, the seat of General Lord Fairfax, fancies hold the largest share. Through the hazels of the park he sees the wood-pecker, who is thus painted to the life :

—Most the hewel's<sup>1</sup> wonders are,  
Who here has the holffelster's<sup>2</sup> care ;  
He walks still upright from the root,  
Measuring the timber with his foot ;  
And all the way, to keep it clean,  
Doth from the bark the wood-moths glean ;  
He, with his beak, examines well  
Which fit to stand, and which to fell ;  
The good he numbers up, and hacks  
As if he mark'd them with the ax ;

and so forth, moralising upon the decay of the oak. At last the charm of the country bursts out from the poet in a noble ecstasy—

Bind me, ye woodbines, in your twines,  
Curl me about, ye gadding vines,  
And oh!so close your circles lace,  
That I may never leave this place :  
But, lest your fetters prove too weak,  
Ere I your silken bondage break,  
Do you, O brambles, chain me too,  
And, courteous briars, nail me through !

Marvell's finest piece in this style is the *Garden*. I can but

<sup>1</sup> Hew-hole, country name for woodpecker.

<sup>2</sup> Wood-hewer.

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quote two stanzas from a poem rarely equalled in that penetrative intensity of feeling, which seems to anticipate Shelley—

What wondrous life is this I lead !  
Ripe apples drop about my head ;  
The luscious clusters of the vine  
Upon my mouth do crush their wine ;  
The nectaren and curious peach  
Into my hands themselves do reach ;  
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,  
Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,  
Withdraws into its happiness :  
The mind, that ocean where each kind  
Does straight its own resemblance find ;  
Yet it creates—transcending these—  
Far other worlds and other seas ;  
Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.

Space regretfully excludes several similar masterpieces, in which also human passion is (we might say) incorporated in the landscape. And the landscape is thus, as always when a painter puts soul into his work, lifted high from topography into an idealised view of Nature. Such are *Damon the Mower*, the *Hay Ropes*, the *Dew Drop*, the lovely picture of the Child among the Flowers, the tropical landscape in the Bermudas, the *Nymph and her Fawn*, perhaps the most delicately, deeply felt of all.

Last in this division we place Robert Herrick (1591-1674), whose poems appeared in the troublous days, 1647-48, and offer another example of the many styles which now diversify our poetry. He might be called an Elizabethan born out of his day, if we look at the grace, the lightness of touch, the gay festive spirit, the (as it were) inevitable melody of his verse : with him, "the rose lingers latest." And, in general, it is only by floral touches, hints of the country, that he brings in Nature. Yet his landscape, though rare, goes further than that earlier mode, is more directly descriptive, and shows a distincter interest in Nature on her own account.

The *Argument of his Book* at once declares Herrick's love of country life—

I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds, and bowers,  
 Of April, May, of June, and July-flowers ;  
 I sing of May-poles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes,  
 Of bride-grooms, brides, and of their bridal-cakes.  
 I write of Youth, of Love : . . .  
 I write of groves, of twilights, and I sing  
 The court of Mab, and of the Fairy King.

The *Harvest Home* is a brilliant picture of country life, wholly free from fanciful or conventional alloy ; the scene in itself and for itself, such as Chaucer might have given it, or, again, as in one of our modern landscapes, we see

The horses, mares, and frisking fillies,  
 Clad, all, in linen white as lillies.  
 The harvest swains and wenches bound  
 For joy, to see the Hock-Cart crown'd.  
 About the cart, hear, how the rout  
 Of rural younglings raise the shout ;  
 Pressing before, some coming after,  
 Those with a shout, and these with laughter.  
 Some bless the cart ; some kiss the sheaves ;  
 Some prank them up with oaken leaves :  
 Some cross the fill-horse ;<sup>1</sup> some with great  
 Devotion, stroke the home-borne wheat :  
 While other rustics, less attent  
 To prayers, than to merriment,  
 Run after with their breeches rent.

So, lastly—passing by the pretty songs to Primroses, Daffodils, Daisies, and Violets—in Herrick's *Country Life* we have a poetical counsel to a landowner, worthy of Horace in its good sense and clearness of detail—

There at the plough thou find'st thy team,  
 With a hind whistling there to them :  
 And cheer'st them up, by singing how  
 The kingdom's portion is the plough.

<sup>1</sup> In the shafts.

This done, then to the enamell'd meads  
Thou go'st ; and as thy foot there treads,  
Thou seest a present God-like power  
Imprinted in each herb and flower :  
And smell'st the breath of great-eyed kine,  
Sweet as the blossoms of the vine.

For sports, for pageantry, and plays,  
Thou hast thy eves, and holydays :  
On which the young men and maids meet,  
To exercise their dancing feet :  
Tripping the comely country Round,  
With daffodils and daisies crown'd.

O happy life ! if that their good  
The husbandmen but understood !  
Who all the day themselves do please,  
And younglings, with such sports as these :  
And lying down, have nought t'affright  
Sweet Sleep, that makes more short the night.

Landscape in English poetry now takes two great steps forward in Milton and in Henry Vaughan. Milton, however, I would hope, is so sufficiently well known, at least in his minor poems, as to excuse me here from lengthy notice. *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the earliest great lyrics of the landscape in our language, despite all later competition still remain supreme for range, variety, lucidity, and melodious charm within their style. And this style is essentially that of the Greek and the earlier English poets, but enlarged to the conception of whole scenes from Nature ; occasionally even panoramic. External images are set simply and impersonally before us, although selected and united in sentiment accordantly with the gay or the meditative mood of the supposed spectator—

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,  
Whilst the landskip round it measures :  
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,  
Where the nibbling flocks do stray ;

Mountains on whose barren breast  
The labouring clouds do often rest ;  
Meadows trim, with daisies pied ;  
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide ;  
Towers and battlements it sees  
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,  
Where perhaps some beauty lies,  
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.

This is perhaps as near a landscape in words—and those words always *the words*—as one can find anywhere : Nature by herself, no sympathy with man suggested ; Yet note how the one final imaginative phrase in its utter loveliness transports us at once within the sphere of human feeling.

Now take a companion picture, the Nightingale of the *Penseroso*—

Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among  
I woo, to hear thy even-song ;  
And, missing thee, I walk unseen  
On the dry smooth-shaven green,  
To behold the wandering Moon,  
Riding near her highest noon,  
Like one that had been led astray  
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,  
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,  
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.<sup>1</sup>

What we gain from Milton, as these specimens in his very purest vein—his essence of landscape—illustrate, is the immense enlargement, the finer proportions, the greater scope, of his scenes from Nature. And with this we have that exquisite style, always noble, always music itself—Mozart without notes—in which Milton is one of the few very greatest masters in all literature : in company—at least it pleases me to fancy—with Homer and Sophocles, with Vergil, with Dante, with Tennyson.

<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt (*On Milton's Lycidas*) has here a fine remark : In this single couplet “there is more intense observation, and intense feeling of Nature (as “if he had gazed himself blind in looking at her), than in twenty volumes of “descriptive poetry.”

The landscape of Milton's great Epic has been inaccurately criticised as too much influenced by classical or Renaissance sentiment. Rather, it is rightly generalised to suit the subject. Eden is here no actual garden, but the representative Paradise of the world, a half-supernatural landscape. Thus we have

Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm ;  
 Others whose fruit, burnish'd with golden rind,  
 Hung amiable ; Hesperian fables true,  
 If true, here only, and of delicious taste :—  
 Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks  
 Grazing the tender herb, were interposed ;  
 Or palmy hillock, or the flowery lap  
 Of some irriguous valley spread her store,  
 Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose.

And, similarly conceived, his pictures of the wonderful acts of Creation have, and can only have, a generic, a universal quality. Yet in the poem, at due moments, to what simplicity of Nature does he not return ! Witness the scene where one

who long in populous city pent,

goes forth into the sweet freshness of English country, or the Indian fig-tree beneath which our fallen first parents take refuge—

—Soon they chose  
 The fig-tree—not that kind for fruit renown'd,  
 But such as, at this day, to Indians known,  
 In Malabar or Decan spreads her arms  
 Branching so broad and long that in the ground  
 The bended twigs take root, and daughters grow  
 About the mother tree, a pillar'd shade  
 High overarch'd, and echoing walks between.

And once more here observe how the human element is just flashed upon us in the closing words.

It is a great transition from Milton, famous over the world, to Henry Vaughan (1621-95), scarce known more now than

when he lived a country doctor in his wild native Brecon. But earliest in Vaughan of all our poets, we unquestionably find that delicate perception of the innermost charm and magic of Nature, the meaning and soul of the wild free landscape, the torrent and the mountain, which, as we have seen, may be traced for centuries before in the Celtic race and its poetry. That much abused doctrine of heredity may here be truly justified. But in Vaughan we also find a sense of the lessons Nature has for man, the harmony of the visible world with the invisible,—not only in its details, but in its larger, its cosmic aspects, what he styles “the great chime And symphony “of Nature,”—such as hardly reappear before we reach Wordsworth. Yet Vaughan, whose special aim, that of rendering religious sentiment, restricted his landscape, and whose language is often obscure or fanciful, we must confess cannot compare with the largeness, the exquisite refinement, of the later poet.

I will quote the poem standing first in Vaughan's book. It is the picture of a walk, allegorical of the soul's movement from the gloom of sin to forgiveness—

A ward, and still in bonds, one day,  
I stole abroad ;  
It was high-Spring, and all the way  
Primrosed, and hung with shade :  
Yet was it frost within ;  
The surly winds  
Blasted my infant buds, and sin  
Like clouds eclipsed my mind.

Storm'd thus, I straight perceived my Spring  
Mere stage and show ;  
My walk a monstrous, mountain'd thing,  
Rough-cast with rocks, and snow ;  
And as a pilgrim's eye,  
Far from relief,  
Measures the melancholy sky,  
Then drops, and rains for grief :  
So sigh'd I upwards still.

Here I repos'd ; but scarce well set,  
 A grove descried  
 Of stately height, whose branches met  
 And mixt, on every side ;  
 I enter'd, and once in,  
 —Amazed to see't—  
 Found all was changed, and a new Spring  
 Did all my senses greet.

Only a little fountain lent  
 Some use for ears,  
 And on the dumb shades' language spent  
 The music of her tears.

The waterfall, that feature which above all lends life by its flash and its music to mountain lands, he has painted with peculiar loving care—

With what deep murmurs, through Time's silent stealth,  
 Dost thy transparent, cool, and watery wealth,  
 Here flowing fall,  
 And chide<sup>1</sup> and call,  
 As if his liquid, loose retinue<sup>2</sup> stay'd  
 Lingering, and were of this steep place afraid.

And then the moral intervenes—

The common pass,  
 As clear as glass,  
 All must descend  
 Not to an end,  
 But quicken'd by this deep and rocky grave,  
 Rise to a longer course more bright and brave.

And so again—

As this loud brook's incessant fall  
 In streaming rings restagnates<sup>3</sup> all,  
 Which reach by course the bank, and then  
 Are no more seen : just so pass men.

<sup>1</sup> Chirp musically.

<sup>2</sup> The moving gauzy body of water.

<sup>3</sup> Calms down to a level.

Vaughan had a deep imaginative sympathy with tree and blossom, animal and bird : he goes into his garden in winter to search for some summer flower now withered down to the earth—

Then taking up what I could nearest spy,  
I digg'd about  
That place where I had seen him to grow out ;  
And by and by  
I saw the warm recluse alone to lie,  
Where fresh and green  
He lived of us unseen.

He questions the Recluse, who

Did there repair  
Such losses as befel him in this air,  
And would ere long  
Come forth most fair and young.

This past, I threw the clothes quite o'er his head ;  
And stung with fear  
Of my own frailty, dropt down many a tear  
Upon his bed ;  
Then sighing whisper'd, " Happy are the dead !  
" What peace doth now  
" Rock him asleep below ! "

So with the life of the bird he had the same inner interest —how refined, how fond !—

Hither thou com'st : the busy wind all night  
Blew through thy lodging, where thy own warm wing  
Thy pillow was. Many a sullen storm  
—For which coarse man seems much the fitter born—  
Rain'd on thy bed  
And harmless head.

And now as fresh and cheerful as the light  
Thy little heart in early hymns doth sing  
Unto that Providence, Whose unseen arm  
Curb'd them, and clothed thee well and warm.

Dante has a sympathetic treatment of bird-life somewhat

## CHAPTER XIII

### *LANDSCAPE POETRY TO THE CLOSE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY*

WE now reach that well-known period, covering about seventy years after the Restoration, when a style of poetry, admirably clear, yet in regard to Nature and often to Man, superficial or restricted, supplanted earlier truth and simplicity, and the true landscape wellnigh vanished from English verse. Upon the several causes of this change or decline it will be here enough to touch slightly. They will be partly found in the English politics of the day, which brought French writers, in their exactness of style, lucidity, and common sense forward—partly in the degeneracy to which the Elizabethan style had fallen. The French Renaissance, in fact, had now its moment with us; for the time the Italian impulse was exhausted. It was a critical age; and, as such, essentially antagonistic to an imaginative—an age, broadly speaking, of light without warmth. Poetry now mainly addressed the wealthy, the well-born, and cultivated classes. Man and his works were the chief subject of Dryden's powerful Muse, and although he looked back to Chaucer, his tales were so modernised by Dryden that the old poet becomes almost unrecognisable. The wonderful genius of Pope, who saw what his readers required, narrowing Dryden's range, largely took for the object of his strenuous labour court life and the artificialities of society. Country life as such was to him intolerable dullness; and thus, in an exquisitely finished and humorous letter of condolence to a young lady compelled to quit London, her only pleasure is

described as fancying herself in Town and dreamily seeing courtiers and coronations go by ; whilst in his passionate *Eloisa* the picturesque and sublime scenery of her convent is spoken of with hatred and horror. Here, however, are a few lines which the tragic heat of the story has sublimed to powerful descriptive poetry—

The darksome pines that o'er yon rocks reclined  
 Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind ;  
 The wandering streams that shine between the hills,  
 The grots that echo to the tinkling rills,  
 The dying gales that pant upon the trees,  
 The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze ;  
 No more these scenes my meditation aid,  
 Or lull to rest the visionary maid.

Yet some return to Nature, some reaction, soon began. Indeed, I think it may be fairly supposed that, despite the popularity of Dryden and Pope in political and courtly circles, the love of the country, and of verse describing it, could not have so died out from English hearts as has been commonly supposed. In fact, the court atmosphere and influence over the nation at large was certainly far less than critics, swayed unconsciously by political partisanship, have represented.

Lady Winchelsea's *Reverie*, published 1713, has a crowd of fresh, delicate images from the landscape. It is a calm night scene—

When in some river, overhung with green,  
 The waving moon and trembling leaves are seen ;  
 When freshen'd grass now bears itself upright,  
 And makes cool banks to pleasing rest invite ; . . .

Whilst now a paler hue the foxglove takes,  
 Yet chequers still with red the dusky brakes ; . . .

When darken'd groves their softest shadows wear,  
 And falling waters we distinctly hear.

And the moral is summed up in the "sedate content" felt by the soul, when undisturbed by fierce sunlight—

But silent musings urge the mind to seek  
Something too high for syllables to speak.

These lines so resemble the style of Wordsworth's own two earliest landscape poems that his choice of them for special praise is not surprising. Lady Winchelsea has also a charming little piece, which in its closeness to detail and its pretty ingenuities of thought, may recall—may have been influenced by—Henry Vaughan's poetry—

Fair Tree ! for thy delightful shade  
'Tis just that some return be made ;  
Sure some return is due from me  
To thy cool shadows, and to thee. . . .  
  
To future ages mayst thou stand  
Untouch'd by the rash workman's hand,  
Till that large stock of sap is spent  
Which gives thy summer's ornament.

In this last graceful allusion to the leaves we have again an image due to advancing botanical science.

Thomas Tickell, in his *Elegy upon Addison's Death* (1719), shows genuine feeling and melody in the lines describing Holland House and park—

Thou Hill, whose brow the antique structures grace,  
Rear'd by bold chiefs of Warwick's noble race,  
Why, once so loved, whene'er thy bower appears,  
O'er my dim eye-balls glance the sudden tears !  
How sweet were once thy prospects fresh and fair,  
Thy sloping walks, and unpolluted air !  
How sweet the glooms beneath thy aged trees,  
Thy noon-tide shadow, and thy evening breeze !  
His image thy forsaken bowers restore ;  
Thy walks and airy prospects charm no more ;  
No more the summer in thy glooms allay'd,  
Thy evening breezes, and thy noon-day shade.

True feeling here has supplied a picture of a tender beauty extremely rare in the poetry of this period ; but elsewhere Tickell describes Kensington Garden under the form of an absurd and unreadable allegory.

Allan Ramsay (1685-1758) deserves praise rather for the intention than for the performance of his *Gentle Shepherd* (1725). A very few lines of genuine Scotch landscape are here placed among conventional and uninteresting dialogue ; like his songs, his Pastoral does not rise above the trite half-classical phrases from which Burns could not always detach himself. But Ramsay's collection of Ballads, much modernised as they are, preludes to Percy's great work.

With James Thomson (1700-1748), apparently a pure Lowland Scot by birth, began what proved to be a widely recognised return to Nature in his *Seasons*, published between 1726 and 1730. His style is indeed deeply marked by the artificiality of the time ; the blank verse moves heavily ; warmth and enthusiasm for his great subject are seldom shown. But he has much small, close, and true observation, in which the lines move with a fresh or spontaneous movement—fine but rare genuine touches of Nature. Such is the picture of sunshine after rain

In a yellow mist  
Far smoking o'er the interminable plain ;

or that of a bank, where

Violets lurk,  
With all the lowly children of the shade.

And I may here quote from one of Thomson's too infrequent lyrics a very pleasing and melodious address to Solitude : Note the sentimental turn of the last quatrain—

Thine is the balmy breath of morn,  
Just as the dew-bent rose is born ;  
And while meridian fervours beat,  
Thine is the woodland dumb retreat ;  
But chief, when evening scenes decay,  
And the faint landscape swims away,  
Thine is the doubtful soft decline,  
And that best hour of musing thine.

But his larger landscape is comparatively rare, and, though minutely accurate, apt to be prosaically tame. Compare

Thomson's waterfall with that which we have given from Vaughan—

At first, an azure sheet, it rushes broad ;  
 Then whitening by degrees, as prone it falls,  
 And from the loud-resounding rocks below  
 Dash'd in a cloud of foam, it sends aloft  
 A hoary mist, and forms a ceaseless shower.  
 Nor can the tortured wave here find repose :  
 But, raging still amid the shaggy rocks,  
 Now flashes o'er the scatter'd fragments, now  
 Aslant the hollow channel rapid darts ;  
 And, falling fast from gradual slope to slope,  
 With wild infracted course, and lessen'd roar,  
 It gains a safer bed, and steals, at last,  
 Along the mazes of the quiet vale.

Or take this picture of tropical scenery, and think of Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*—

Great are the scenes, with dreadful beauty crown'd  
 And barbarous wealth, that see, each circling year,  
 Returning suns and double seasons pass :  
 Rocks rich in gems, and mountains big with mines,  
 That on the high equator ridgy rise,  
 Whence many a bursting stream auriferous plays :  
 Majestic woods, of every vigorous green,  
 Stage above stage, high waving o'er the hills.

. . . . .

Bear me, Pomona, to thy citron groves,  
 To where the lemon and the piercing lime,  
 With the deep orange, glowing through the green,  
 Their lighter glories blend.

How cold does this landscape show by those of this century ! How little penetrated with music or with the spirit of the South ! And so the poem, largely filled with discussion upon subjects apart from Nature, flows on with even pace, hardly rising or sinking ; in style and metre, we should add, not culpably imitative of Milton. It owes its fame—I can

hardly say its survival—to the happy incident of its date. Yet the *Seasons* fairly earned contemporary reputation. The pages are filled, in Thomson's own graceful words, "with many a proof of recollected love." And although Nature there is mostly found in an artificial dress, we can easily see how great and useful its effect must have been in its own day. Its celebrity proves the novelty and the importance of the attempt; it startled its contemporaries like a heresy. As Johnson set his face against Percy, (so Pope tried to laugh down Thomson;) but in each case, the opponents, able as they were, fought to no purpose against the changing spirit of the age.

? Pope  
imitates  
some lines  
of the  
*Seasons*.

The once famous *Grongar Hill*, by John Dyer (1700-1758), written in a pretty tripping metre and fluent style, fails with readers now through its want of force and insight. Like his *Country Walk*, which is more satisfactory, we find rather the new idea of verse devoted to landscape than the effective rendering of it. Dyer obviously modelled himself on the *Allegro* and *Pensero*, and, as with Milton, all the natural features of *Grongar Hill* are viewed in relation to the spectator—seen, as it were, through the glass of his moralising temper. The poet cannot trust himself frankly to describe Nature for her own sake, like Wordsworth or Shelley.

An anonymous poem upon Shenstone's Gardens at Hagley has a little landscape which may mark the stage at which our poetry had arrived by 1756. The writer is painting the grounds laid out by Shenstone, and ornamented with minute, over-anxious care—

The lawn, of aspect smooth and mild ;  
The forest-ground grotesque and wild ;  
The shrub that scents the mounting gale ;  
The stream rough dashing down the vale,  
From rock to rock, in eddies tost ;  
The distant lake in which 't is lost ;  
Blue hills gay beaming through the glade ;  
Lone urns that solemnize the shade ;  
Sweet interchange of all that charms  
In groves, meads, dingles, rivulets, farms.

The *mild lawn*, the *lone urns*—can anything place us more immediately in the central period of the eighteenth century?

By this time the critical school of Dryden, Pope, and their followers had done its valuable work, clearing literature from the fantasies and euphuistic ingenuities into which the Elizabethan quality of verse had largely lapsed. The courtly style, the pictures of manners, may have begun to weary. The first definite traces of Romanticism, in its modern sense, are felt—an element which received great added force through the publication of Percy's admirable *Reliques* in 1765.<sup>1</sup>

A subdued and sober landscape, not free from sentimentalism, was now appearing. The scene shifts: agricultural country itself, farms and shepherds, are not sufficiently rustic: “Hide ‘me from day’s garish eye,’” is the poet’s exclamation; we find ourselves with Warton in the abysses of Whichwood, or with Logan, like the writer above quoted, by a monumental urn set in dim shades at twilight; or Langhorne gives us the *Visions of Fancy* (1762)—

Slow let me climb the mountain’s airy brow ;  
The green height gain’d, in museful rapture lie ;  
Sleep in the murmur of the woods below,  
Or look on Nature with a lover’s eye.

But the finest passage in this mode of our poetry is perhaps James Beattie’s appeal (*cir.* 1770) to the worldly man in favour of natural beauty—

O how canst thou renounce the boundless store  
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields !  
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,  
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields ;  
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,  
And all that echoes to the song of even,  
All that the mountain’s sheltering bosom shields,  
And all the dread magnificence of Heaven,

O how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven ?

Here, I think, we may see the way distinctly opening to our century.

<sup>1</sup> The difficulty of assigning dates to the often beautiful Northern ballads renders them unsuitable for quotation.

A little very noteworthy group, however, remains. The landscape of Collins (1720-56) was apparently much influenced by Greek poetry. His work reminds us of the great, rugged, sublime, choral songs, of the audacious metaphors of Aeschylus. But in his *Ode to Evening*, Collins reaches Greek reserve, lucidity, balance ; its underlying ecstasy (wanting in his cold *Fidele dirge*), makes it a triumph of unrhymed song<sup>1</sup>—

—If chill blustering winds, or driving rain,  
Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut,  
That from the mountain's side  
Views wilds, and swelling floods,  
  
And hamlets brown, and dim-discover'd spires ;  
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all  
Thy dewy fingers draw  
The gradual dusky veil.

Gray also (1716-71), who reminds one of Sophocles or Pindar in his splendid Odes, gave our poetry another descriptive pastoral masterpiece in the *Elegy*. This, it is needless to quote. But I will give a couplet which he made (or rather which made itself) when walking with a friend in the neighbourhood of Cambridge—

There pipes the woodlark, and the song-thrush there  
Scatters his loose notes in the waste of air.

Can two lines more exquisite in truth and in metrical felicity be found in any poet? <sup>2</sup> Yet, despite the beauty and skill of his natural painting in the Odes, Gray never describes Nature for her own sake. It is always with some moral, some human feeling in view.

<sup>1</sup> Keble, it may be here noted, has a Burial Hymn, also in rhymeless stanzas, which may be well put near the *Ode to Evening*—

I thought to meet no more, so dreary seem'd  
Death's interposing veil, and thou so pure,  
Thy place in Paradise  
Beyond where I could soar. . . .

<sup>2</sup> But compare Gray's favourite Pindar (*OI.* i. 6), speaking of *δοτρον ερήμας δι' αἰθέρος*.

It is the same eighteenth-century spirit which reigns in Goldsmith's little masterpieces. Only as vignettes peeping out among human figures has his happy pencil given the landscape of the *Deserted Village* (1769)—

How often have I paused on every charm,  
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,  
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,  
The decent church that topt the neighbouring hill,  
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,  
For talking age and whispering lovers made !

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close,  
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose ;  
There, as I pass'd with careless steps and slow,  
The mingling notes came soften'd from below ;  
The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,  
The sober herd that low'd to meet their young ;  
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool ;  
The playful children just let loose from school ;  
The watch-dog's voice that bay'd the whispering wind,  
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind ;  
These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,  
And fill'd each pause the nightingale had made.

Goldsmith had been then long a town dweller, and seems rather to have generalised his Auburn than painted any special village ; nor have his descriptive touches in a marked way the convincing force of those which an eye, set on things seen, naturally supplies to a true poet. Yet his seemingly careless ease reveals consummate art. Goldsmith, doubtless, felt that his proper study was Man. Hence the Greek reserve in the treatment of the accessory landscape. Why, then, have these fragmentary glimpses so permanent a hold on our memories and hearts ? We may find this in their perfect propriety of choice, their "keeping," as painters say, in their delightful simplicity of thought and expression,—perhaps above all, in the music, the equable balance of syllables, with which Goldsmith—and he only—by some mysterious gift of grace, has half-transformed the too monotonously accented decasyllable couplet of Pope.

His work, with that of Collins and Gray, are enough to redeem the eighteenth century from the charge of unenthusiastic prosaism too carelessly brought against it.

With Goldsmith we may mention Smollett, whose best novel, *Humphrey Clinker*, contains a musical and graceful little Ode to Leven Water, written by 1771: although some traces of the conventional phraseology of that age survive.

Here, also, a few words must be given to Macpherson's professedly ancient Epic of Ossian (1762-63). The long controversy which raged about this book may be now considered as set at rest; Macpherson (as we have before noticed) really had a substratum of genuine old Celtic song, oral and manuscript, but used his materials too freely, and dressed them often in a spurious antique style. Yet it is difficult to doubt that these wild lays, with their Highland skies and mountains, savage and mysterious, held a really valuable place in aid of the Romantic movement; that they turned the mind of his readers to Nature in her scenes of rude yet noble and impressive magnificence.

Cowper's *Task* is almost curiously barren of landscape; and the style does not essentially differ from Thomson's except in that the poet himself is the spectator; whence, naturally, the landscape is more intimate and more devout. This poem, though of much value in its own day, now certainly disappoints. It is through his lovely lyric, *The Poplars are fell'd . . .* with its sad graceful moral that he is entitled to a place here.

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Burns, lastly, with his light, direct, and masterly touch has painted the scenery of his native land. In his Songs, it appears, however, simply as a background contrasted or sympathetic with human passion. It is thus in the *Highland Mary*, *The Birks of Aberfeldy*, *Ye Banks and Braes*. But the Elegy upon Captain Henderson, although it calls on all Nature to lament his death in the old exaggerated unreal manner, has many touches, truthful, if not showing close observation, which are laid in with that direct power, that first intention, which always mark Burns when at his best—

At dawn, when every grassy blade  
 Droops with a diamond at its head,  
 At ev'n, when beans their fragrance shed,  
 I' the rustling gale,  
 Ye maukins whiddin'<sup>1</sup> through the glade,  
 Come, join my wail.

And we may quote a stanza from the *Petition of Bruar Water*, that the glen should not be laid bare—

Let lofty firs, and ashes cool,  
 My lowly banks o'erspread,  
 And view, deep-bending in the pool,  
 Their shadows' watery bed !  
 Let fragrant barks in woodbines drest  
 My craggy cliffs adorn ;  
 And, for the little songster's nest,  
 The close-embowering thorn.

With these lines may be compared some simply forcible stanzas upon the destruction of the Drumlanrig Woods. The Nith speaks—

There was a time, it's nae lang syne,  
 Ye might hae seen me in my pride  
 When all my banks sae bravely saw  
 Their woody pictures in my tide ;  
 When hanging beech and spreading elm  
 Shaded my stream sae clear and cool,  
 And stately oaks their twisted arms  
 Threw broad and dark across the pool ;  
 When glinting through the trees appear'd  
 The wee white cot aboon the mill,  
 And peacefu' rose its ingle reek ,  
 That slowly curléd up the hill.  
 But now the cot is bare and cauld,  
 Its branchy shelter's lost and gane,  
 And scarce a stinted birk is left  
 To shiver in the blast its lane.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hares scurrying.

<sup>2</sup> Alone.

The *Mountain Daisy*, however, one of his earliest poems, is doubtless the most perfect painting of Nature which Burns has left us—filled as it is in the truly modern manner with the gentlest sympathy for the flower united with graceful description. He sees the daisy growing just before the ploughshare in the stubble-field—

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,  
Thy srawie bosom sun-ward spread,  
Thou lifts thy unassuming head  
        In humble guise ;  
But now the share uptears thy bed,  
        And low thou lies !

Yet humanity is always the first interest with Burns, and more than one finely expressed moral completes the poem. Pity, that his own life proved often so little controlled by what his verse could set forth so admirably !

Wordsworth, whose admiration for him was deep and lasting, comments on his landscape in terms like those upon which I have ventured, remarking that although, during the residence of Burns at Mossiel Farm, splendid mountain scenery must have been constantly before his eyes, yet that he nowhere has noticed it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, ed. 1851.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *LANDSCAPE IN RECENT POETRY—SCOTT AND BYRON*

AFTER the comparative poverty of the century preceding the nineteenth, we now reach that sudden burst of poetry which has placed the nineteenth century by the Elizabethan age in wealth and splendour :—with Vergil we might say, *a grander line of events opens now before us; it is a grander work that we are beginning.*<sup>1</sup> From the earliest days of Greece the literature of Europe has witnessed a few analogous meteor-showers of song, and many an attempt has been made to connect them with the general state and history of the nations thus distinguished. Attractive, however, as these attempts may be, I cannot find them convincing. Parnassus in this matter seems to resemble Vesuvius or Etna—the great deeper-lying forces of Nature to which Poetry owes these displays of splendour are really unknown. It is enough to say that they are eruptions full, not of wrath and ruin, but of warmth and light and blessing to each country in turn. For poets, if not the “unacknowledged legislators” of mankind, as Shelley said in his fervent youth, yet beyond question powerfully lead or express, even when they follow, that gradual movement in civilisation which sweeps us through the circles of what it is at least safer and wiser to call Transformation than Advance.

Quitting this wide and difficult region of thought, we may note—always in its relation to landscape treatment—a few

<sup>1</sup> maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo,  
maiis opus moveo.

*Aen.* vii, 44.

obvious and sometimes external causes of the mighty outburst in English poetry now before us.

Among these I should put first in date, after those anticipatory movements from Thomson onward which we have lately examined, not so much the French Revolution and its political consequences to Europe, as, rather, that influence which played so great a part in producing the Revolution—the influence of Rousseau. In his eloquent sophistries—life according to Nature, primitive simplicity, subjective sentiment, and passion in place of reason, with the like—Romanticism, the keynote of our century, found its strongest impulse. A few words from a letter of Wordsworth on the “Education of the ‘Poet,’ ” written apparently about 1800,<sup>1</sup> may best set this tendency before us: “A great Poet ought, . . . to a certain ‘degree, . . . to render [men’s] feelings more sane, pure, and ‘permanent, in short, more consonant to nature, that is, to ‘eternal nature, and the great moving spirit of things.’ ” Rousseau at his best, perhaps better than his best, here speaks clearly.

Next we may observe that the great continental wars, whilst excluding Englishmen from Europe, yet curiously allowed the native tone of German literature, almost unknown to us during the eighteenth century, to penetrate and affect our poets. Scott’s early ballads, and his translation from Goethe’s first—and we may add, by far most dramatic drama—*Goetz*, are here our witnesses.

On the romantic spirit thus evolved it may be enough for our purpose to add that it is a mood apt to look upon the wild landscape as the most genuine unalloyed display of the spirit of Nature—a sentiment which leads also to recognition of a soul pervading her, or to God as manifesting His omnipresence where man has not touched His work. And with this is joined a vivid sense of the essential unison between man and the visible universe,—a mood opposite to that externalism of nature so marked in the poetry of Greece. The peculiar retrospective bias of Romanticism, its passion for the great things of the past, has, however, rarely influenced landscape in verse. But a meditative tone allied to sadness,

<sup>1</sup> *Life*, by C. Wordsworth, vol. i, p. 196 (ed. 1851).

which with human life contrasts Nature in her beauty, or in her forceful moods, with a fast-increasing proneness to subjective treatment, are notes often audible.

In addition to these deeper causes, the rapidly extending love of landscape in poetry was much aided by those facilities for travel in which every decade of this century has shown such marvellous advances. There was nothing of charm, no romance, in the painfulness with which mountain regions were traversed two hundred years since and later ; nor could the discomforts of the road attune a traveller's mind to the contemplation of the Sublime. Hence Alpine scenery, peaks and passes, left Addison with no feeling but of horror and repugnance, and only wakened even Gray himself to a dawning sense of their latent poetry. Thus, strange though it may seem, among external incitements to landscape study railways may be placed first. Not far behind their influence has been that of physical science, though perhaps rather by immensely aiding accuracy of thought and word in the description of Nature, than by direct botanical, geological, or stellar teaching. It is within other regions than our limited sphere that the natural sciences have profoundly affected poetry.

Last should be noticed the vastly multiplied habit of life in large cities, leading men to Nature by way of contrast and refreshment to eye and soul. The later Greek poetry, we have seen, was thus moved ; and nowhere has it been set forth with more exquisite truth, more musical felicity than by Vergil—

O too happy country folk, did they but know their blessings !<sup>1</sup>

with the splendid lines that follow upon the contrasted life of Rome, the luxury, the vanity, the bloodshed. Yet neither were cities so colossal, nor, on the other hand, means of escape to the country so facile as in our own time ; whilst also more and more varied scenes of natural beauty are offered to the modern traveller.

Looking at the development before us as a whole, we might

<sup>1</sup> o fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,  
agricolas !

say that the critical spirit, the somewhat chilly reasonableness which marked the preceding period, gave place to the constructive; or better perhaps, that in the nineteenth century creation has played a greater as well as a far more durable part than criticism. This change in itself was obviously in favour of landscape in poetry, whether for its own sake or as intertwined with the common interests of life, or with larger and profounder thoughts.

Let me now briefly recall the gradual steps in the poetry of landscape with which I prefaced this essay; so far as it may be possible to give adequate expression to the indefinable affinities between Man and Nature. And it should always be remembered that though in some degree chronological, yet these steps not only overlap, but may be trodden by the poet at his will in our own day.

*First*, we have pure, simple, almost animal pleasure; and with this, Nature subordinate and external to Man, dealt with as a background to human life, yet *concurring* rather than *coalescing* with it; her deeper and higher aspects being meanwhile thought of under the guise of those spiritual presences—Pan, Nymph, Oread, and the like fairy forms of Hellenic imagination: whilst, in Roman poetry, these aspects gradually assumed a nearer and more loving conception of Nature.

*Secondly*, in direct contrast to Greece and Rome we have the Hebrew mind, living as in the immediate presence of God and seeing His Hand and His Law in every natural appearance.

*Thirdly*, mediaeval culture and sentiment, Religion, with the early spirit of Romance, Celtic and Teutonic, widely enlarged the field: landscape being now and henceforth by poets and painters sympathetically treated as the direct background to humanity.

*Fourthly*, what was knowledge of Nature now became intimacy; this word may perhaps fairly sum up the modern mode of landscape treatment in poetry. We should remember that the difference between modern and ancient, here as ever, is a difference rather of degree than of nature, the old modulating into the new by beautiful changes. Hence modernism has many aspects which cannot be strictly defined. Pure description for its own sake now becomes frequent; or the

landscape is coloured by human passion, the "hues borrowed "from the heart"; or it is painted to enforce moral or religious parallels; until, in decisively modern days, we have at once greater accuracy in detail, and what, in one word, though imperfectly, we might sum up as deeper penetration into the inner soul of Nature. And throughout this long career, from Homer downwards, the effort of poetry has been to harmonise landscape with the prevalent conceptions of thought, feeling, and dominant interests; in a word, with life in its wholeness, as each period fashioned it. For it is a truism to add that, however pure and fine may be the Song of the Muses, unless it echo and by echoing reinforce or correct the thought and purpose of the age, it is but a voice crying in the wilderness.

This little preface, I hope, will allow me now to complete the most difficult part of my essay largely by actual quotation from the verse of our century. And if this age be treated at much greater length than any before it, my reason is, not that the poets are recent or our own contemporaries, but that the study and love of Nature has during this century made so decisive and so splendid an advance as, from this point of view, to stand in line with the parallel progress in physical science. Quotations so long as some that follow *could* not have been made from earlier poetry.

My wish throughout this book has been to leave the poets to speak for themselves, with only such commentary as due explanation might demand. And gladly would I have dispensed with that somewhat invidious, if not egotistic, task, in case of the illustrious band now about to pass before us. The verdict of Time has not yet fixed their place—so far as it ever is fixed—in common estimate; and hence the writer, however reluctant, cannot escape treading on the "shifting and deceitful "ashes, under which lie the fires" of antagonist valuations. Among the "Gods of the great Family" each has a song of his own—each treats the orchestra after his individual fashion; yet, on the whole, from Scott to Tennyson, a general harmony prevails. For whenever the highest art is in question, even the strongest originality cannot escape—indeed, would not escape, were it possible—the tone and temper of the age,

the surrounding atmosphere. And further, looking always to poetry of the first class, the essential excellences of each workman are apt to show a singular likeness, a fraternal equality ; as very similar features, all the world over, are presented by the loftiest mountain summits.

It is difficult among our modern poets to trace clearly a definite and systematic progress, such as that from Pope to Cowper ; and it would be rash to do more than try to indicate the respective aims and powers over Landscape in Poetry of Scott, Byron, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Browning, and Tennyson. But I hope that the order in which they will now be briefly reviewed will be found consistent, if not with the rank of their individual genius, more or less with the natural sequence of that art or inspiration which was successively impersonated in them.

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), the poet of the series earliest formed, if not earliest in publication, is also the one who has left us the least of natural description. His style was modelled at first chiefly on the Border ballads, and the word picturesque may perhaps best define it. The landscape is often rather touched-in by way of support to his figures than painted for its own sake or as the mere background of earlier days ; human interests and passions, or those historical memories in which his soul delighted, in general, pervade it. Such is the fine picture of the shepherd in winter,<sup>1</sup> or that of Edinburgh from Blackford Hill,<sup>2</sup> to which Scott's fervent love of his native land has given that peculiar vivid rapidity, that manly animation, which were the characteristic notes of his style. The Edinburgh picture would be spoiled by partial quotation ; let us take two carefully finished specimens of detailed landscape from the *Lord of the Isles*. Scott is here describing the voyage of Bruce from Skye to Carrick, and then the view of Carrick itself, where Bruce had spent his childhood—

Now launch'd once more, the inland sea  
They furrow with fair augury,

<sup>1</sup> *Marmion*, Introd. to Canto iv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

And steer for Arran's isle ;  
The sun, ere yet he sunk behind  
Ben-Ghoil, the *Mountain of the Wind*,  
Gave his grim peaks a greeting kind,  
And bade Loch Ranza smile.  
Thither their destined course they drew ;  
It seem'd the isle her monarch knew,  
So brilliant was the landward view,  
    The ocean so serene ;  
Each puny wave in diamonds roll'd  
O'er the calm deep, where hues of gold  
    With azure strove and green.  
The hill, the vale, the tree, the tower,  
Glow'd with the tints of evening's hour,  
    The beach was silver sheen ;  
The wind breathed soft as lover's sigh,  
And, oft renew'd, seem'd oft to die,  
    With breathless pause between.  
O who, with speech of war and woes,  
Would wish to break the soft repose  
    Of such enchanting scene ?

They gain'd the Chase,—a wide domain  
Left for the Castle's silvan reign :  
(Seek not the scene—the axe, the plough,  
The boor's dull fence, have marr'd it now ;)  
But then, soft swept in velvet green  
The plain, with many a glade between,  
Whose tangled alleys far invade  
The depth of the brown forest shade.  
Here the tall fern obscured the lawn,  
Fair shelter for the sportive fawn ;  
There, tufted close with copsewood green  
Was many a swelling hillock seen ;  
And all around was verdure meet  
For pressure of the fairies' feet.  
The glossy holly loved the park,  
The yew-tree lent its shadow dark,  
And many an old oak, worn and bare,  
With all its shiver'd boughs, was there.

Lovely between, the moonbeams fell  
On lawn and hillock, glade and dell.  
The gallant Monarch sigh'd to see  
These glades so loved in childhood free,  
Bethinking that, as outlaw now,  
He ranged beneath the forest bough.

Note here the utter simplicity of the treatment : there is no attempt on Scott's part to draw out the finer or intenser meanings of the landscape ; it is not even consciously contrasted with the human passions and incidents to which it is the background. His landscape in general is also slightly sketched,—“careless glance and reckless rhyme,” in Mr. Ruskin’s phrase ; we rarely find the *convincing* word : the colour, as the most obvious feature, being always rather dwelt upon than the form of the scene.

It is, however, in the least well-managed of Scott’s tales in verse, the *Rokeby* of 1813, that he seems to have endeavoured to relieve the tangled web of his story by the beautiful North country landscape which he studied with minute care. The Rokeby region is specially marked by its glen and river scenery ; from this our examples are taken. The first paints a rock on Greta side, where the “bucanier” hero, Bertram, has taken refuge—

—Spent with toil, he listless eyed  
The course of Greta’s playful tide ;  
Beneath, her banks now eddying dun,  
Now brightly gleaming to the sun,  
As, dancing over rock and stone,  
In yellow light her currents shone,  
Matching in hue the favourite gem<sup>1</sup>  
Of Albin’s mountain-diamond.  
Then, tired to watch the currents play,  
He turn’d his weary eyes away,  
To where the bank opposing show’d  
Its huge, square cliffs through shaggy wood.  
One, prominent above the rest,  
Rear’d to the sun its pale gray breast ;

<sup>1</sup> The topaz Cairngorm of Ben Macdhui in Braemar.

---

Around its broken summit grew  
The hazel rude, and sable yew ;  
A thousand varied lichens dyed  
Its waste and weather-beaten side ;  
And round its rugged basis lay,  
By time or thunder rent away,  
Fragments, that, from its frontlet torn,  
Were mantled now by verdant thorn.

Now follows the wide view from Barnard Castle—

What prospects, from his watch-tower high,  
Gleam gradual on the warder's eye !—  
Far sweeping to the east, he sees  
Down his deep woods the course of Tees,  
And tracks his wanderings by the steam  
Of summer vapours from the stream ;  
And ere he paced his destined hour  
By Brackenbury's dungeon-tower,  
These silver mists shall melt away,  
And dew the woods with glittering spray.  
Then in broad lustre shall be shown  
That mighty trench of living stone,  
And each huge trunk that, from the side  
Reclines him o'er the darksome tide,  
Where Tees, full many a fathom low,  
Wears with his rage no common foe ;  
For pebbly bank, nor sand-bed here,  
Nor clay-mound, checks his fierce career,  
Condemn'd to mine a channell'd way,  
O'er solid sheets of marble gray.

Lastly, a more decorative passage, a more imaginative  
always in the same country—

'T was a fair scene ! the sunbeam lay  
On battled tower and portal grey :  
And from the grassy slope he sees  
The Greta flow to meet the Tees ;  
Where, issuing from her darksome bed,  
She caught the morning's eastern red,

And through the softening vale below  
Roll'd her bright waves, in rosy glow,  
All blushing to her bridal bed,  
Like some shy maid in convent bred ;  
While linnet, lark, and blackbird gay,  
Sing forth her nuptial roundelay.

How clearly has this little piece of fantasy sprung from the intense pleasure with which the nature-impassioned poet studied the scene ! Equally beautiful in choice of detail and simple melody is the picture of a streamlet in Thor's Dell (Canto iv. stan. ii. iii.)

*Rokeby*, it may be feared, is read now so comparatively little, that I have been tempted into free quotation. Why, it may be asked, should verse of this quality be ranked with the profounder, the more powerful, more refined, and richer poetry of which the present century has given us such a splendid abundance ? Scott's landscape seems to me to deserve this place because of its entire straightforwardness and freedom from affectation ; from its peculiar objectivity, so characteristic of the early, the Homeric, ages, so sincere, so heart-felt, so healthy. If it wants the deeper tones, the finer and richer *minutiae*, of our later verse, it is almost single, especially in some of the short songs or ballads, in the exquisite simplicity with which it handles Nature, taking her and her beauty always as they are ; setting them, as it were, in contrast (but a contrast of juxtaposition, not of expressed moral) to life and human thought. So the hills and the sea looked five hundred years since when Bruce sailed, so they look now. Scott leaves it to us to draw the lesson, only here and there throwing in a slight sad undertone of reflection. He is the most unself-conscious of our great modern poets.

Let me now leave this great and delightful master, "the whole world's darling," as Wordsworth nobly named him, with a few lovely lines painting a little mountain glen, which will perhaps have the charm of novelty to most readers—

The fairy path that we pursue,  
Distinguish'd but by greener hue,

---

Winds round the purple brae,  
While Alpine flowers of varied dye  
For carpet serve, or tapestry.  
See how the little runnels leap,  
In threads of silver, down the steep,  
    To swell the brooklet's moan !  
Seems that the Highland Naiad grieves,  
Fantastic while her crown she weaves  
Of rowan, birch, and alder leaves,  
    So lovely, and so lone.<sup>1</sup>

These words are placed in the mouth of a lover as he leads his bride through her new domain. With what fine taste has Scott—the earliest and still the most romantic of our romantic poets—here thrown in the little classical allusion ! What a grace, also, let me add, does this echo from the old world impart !

Scott, after Chaucer, is the one of all our non-dramatic poets who puts himself least forward ; one of the few who thought little or nothing, personally, of themselves ; the one who trusts most to letting his characters and scenes speak for themselves. By inevitable natural law he is indeed, of course, present in his work ; but, like Homer, like Shakespeare, behind the curtain ; latent in his own creation. Lord Byron (1788-1824), all know, is here Scott's direct antithesis. Yet Byron is not "subjective," in the ordinary sense of that word. It was his own sufferings, at least in all his earlier poetry, which constrained him to write, which coloured his verse. But his egotism, if it should bear that name, has been greatly exaggerated, after his too common fashion, by Macaulay. Byron's landscape style resembles that of Scott in its direct painting, in its rapid motion, but, as a rule, with very superior though very unequal power. In fact, to digress for a moment, perhaps no English poet has equalled Byron, whether in his grasp and sweep of subject, his free sympathy with mankind, or in what we might call his initial force. In narrative, how straight to the mark does his energy go, compared with the bewildering

<sup>1</sup> *The Bridal of Triermain*, Int. to Canto III.

discursiveness of the *Revolt of Islam* or *Endymion*, the tortuous progress, never ending, still beginning, of the *Ring and the Book!* In this movement, this directness of power, and here only, Byron's style was doubtless affected by Scott.

It is easy for criticism, as, indeed, has latterly been her main task with this great genius, to touch the faults in his writing ; it is careless, self-conscious, morbid ; at times spasmodic. It is often wanting in taste ; in *Childe Harold*, in his lyrical ballad, the *Isles of Greece*, and elsewhere, like Victor Hugo, he offers frequently sonorous rhetoric in place of song ; he often passes into absolute, into almost shocking, false notes both in sentiment and in diction. To sum up in Mr. J. A. Symonds' phrase,<sup>1</sup> except in a few exquisite lyrics, his verse is "too like the raw material of poetry." Yet, with all this, and after all this, even in his early lines it is impossible not to recognise the hand of a mighty master—unless indeed we are enslaved and bound to limit our taste by partisan favouritism and coterie decrees : as if Parnassus could not afford space for many styles ;—or as if a man should worship crimson and therefore despise blue. Europe has changed greatly during the eighty years since *Childe Harold* was written ; and we in England have been since fortunate in sweeter, purer, and (on the whole) more truly imaginative tones of poetry than Byron's. Yet, when successful, his work retains its original freshness, its stimulating power, its largeness of sentiment, its humanity veiled under cynicism. What has been condemned as mere calculated and spurious sensibility was, in truth, the clumsy turbid expression of genuine feeling, by an artist who could rarely put in his deepest, finest tints with success—who had little command of *gradation*. No one ever did more to conceal from the world, and too successfully, his own sincerity ;—to which, doubtless, he was not always true ; till (if a line may be quoted which I once applied to Cromwell)—

He wore to himself and his fellows the mask that was almost a face.

Much as his gifts were wasted and misused, they qualified him to be the most representative man of his time in poetry—and,

<sup>1</sup> Life in Ward's *Selections*.

more, the one English poet of his time who wrought for himself European acceptance.

If in *Don Juan* Byron's variety of range is most eminently displayed, *Childe Harold* (with exception of a few lyrics alike precious for brilliancy and passion) must be held his masterpiece as poet ; at his best in command of language, in single words and phrases, wellnigh unique in their absolute directness of force ; at his best, also, in meditative thought and pathos, in skilful union of historical with romantic interest. In our special field, Nature, his magnificent sweep, his vivid power, almost passing into bravado, have their full scope ; here his brush paints the large landscape of Titian, or Wilson, or Turner. Byron's main attitude towards Nature, like Scott's, is simply descriptive ; in his own beautiful phrase, he loves "Earth only for its earthly sake." Yet this landscape is not unfrequently coloured by some moral connected with life, especially that of his own sad experience ; or even by a vague suggestion of Soul or Deity immanent in Nature. In this respect Byron approaches Shelley, and may have been influenced by him.

The Tales, though laid in picturesque and varied scenery, afford few hints of landscape ; and, indeed, for success where the vignette style is required, he has rarely sufficient fineness of touch. His fondness for the sea has inspired him with a few brilliant lines describing the pirate's vessel in the *Corsair*—

She walks the waters like a thing of life,  
And seems to dare the elements to strife ;

and again—

Meantime, the steady breeze serenely blew,  
And fast and falcon-like the vessel flew.

One little sketch from the *Siege of Corinth* may be given—

'Tis midnight : on the mountains brown  
The cold, round moon shines deeply down :  
Blue roll the waters, blue the sky  
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,

Bespangled with those isles of light,  
So wildly, spiritually bright.

The waves on either shore lay there,  
Calm, clear, and azure as the air ;  
And scarce their foam the pebbles shook,  
But murmur'd meekly as the brook.

In *Manfred* the Mountain Spirit's song upon Mont Blanc has immense vivid energy, although the lyrical effect is injured by the bounding anapaestic metre which Byron's ear was not fine enough to use with the skill and modulation of Tennyson, or of Swinburne, especially, perhaps, in his earlier work. If this and the other lyrics in *Manfred* were suggested by Shelley, the comparison is curiously unfavourable to Byron. He is more successful in the blank verse Alpine pictures—

The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,  
Where the birds dare not build, nor insect's wing  
Flit o'er the herbless granite.

There is a very masterful passage in the Address to the Sun (Act iii. Scene 2). The personification here is singularly able ; though, characteristically, it is less a physical than a historical description, connected everywhere with the human aspects of our "chief star"—

Glorious Orb ! the idol  
Of early nature, and the vigorous race  
Of undiseased mankind. . . .  
Most glorious orb ! that wert a worship, ere  
The mystery of thy making was reveal'd !  
Thou earliest minister of the Almighty,  
Which gladden'd, on their mountain tops, the hearts  
Of the Chaldean shepherds, till they pour'd  
Themselves in orisons !

The picture of himself when in Greece, drawn in Byron's most impassioned and perfect poem, the *Dream* of his early love, has a breadth, a simple beauty more beautiful through

its very unadornment, such as our later art in words or colours has rarely reached—

—He lay

Rerosing from the noontide sultriness,  
Couch'd among fallen columns, in the shade  
Of ruin'd walls that had survived the names  
Of those who rear'd them ; by his sleeping side  
Stood camels grazing, and some goodly steeds  
Were fasten'd near a fountain ; and a man,  
Clad in a flowing garb, did watch the while,  
While many of his tribe slumber'd around :  
And they were canopied by the blue sky,  
So cloudless, clear, and purely beautiful,  
That God alone was to be seen in heaven.

Byron's landscape, however, as we have said, is most copiously exhibited in *Childe Harold*. And as the writing of this poem was spread over some seven or eight years, it exhibits a very marked progressive advance in power. The landscape of Canto II is much above that of Cintra in Portugal in Canto I, which is hardly more than a simple list—

The horrid crags, by toppling convent crown'd,  
The cork-trees hoar that clothe the shaggy steep ;

and so forth. But in the next book we have a meditation, truly felt, though the touch may be still somewhat immature, on the sense of solitude and its charm for man—

To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,  
To slowly trace the forest's shady scene,  
Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,  
And mortal foot hath ne'er or rarely been ;  
To climb the trackless mountain all unseen,  
With the wild flock that never needs a fold ;  
Alone o'er steeps and foaming falls to lean ;  
This is not solitude ; 'tis but to hold  
Converse with Nature's charms, and view her stores unroll'd.

Beautiful and brilliant is the landscape of Attica, even in its desolation—

Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild ;  
Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,  
Thine olive ripe as when Minerva smiled,  
And still his honey'd wealth Hymettus yields ;  
There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,  
The freeborn wanderer of thy mountain air ;  
Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,  
Still in his beam Mendeli's<sup>1</sup> marbles glare ;  
Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.

It is, however, in the last two cantos that Byron shows his full force of wing ; and well known as they are, or perhaps I should say, ought to be, a few specimens may be here given.

If in the stanza last quoted he shows his peculiar gift of uniting the landscape with historical associations, in the following from Canto III it is pure human love for a relation dead at Waterloo which inspired a little picture of singular tenderness and beauty :—

There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee,  
And mine were nothing, had I such to give ;  
But when I stood beneath the fresh green tree,  
Which living waves where thou didst cease to live,  
And saw around me the wide field revive  
With fruits and fertile promise, and the Spring  
Come forth her work of gladness to contrive,  
With all her reckless birds upon the wing,  
I turn'd from all she brought to those she could not bring.

In the powerful Swiss scenes which follow, it has been said that Byron was influenced by Wordsworth, brought under his notice whilst he was accompanied in that country by Shelley. If so, however, the manner is all his own. The mountain pictures which the lake of Geneva suggested, the effects of sky and storm in particular, are executed with a noble carelessness ; alive in every touch, dashed in with the vigour of Tintoret or Rubens ; in their faults and merits equally remote from the fashion of our day. Let me here also add that many of the unsatisfactory passages in *Childe*

<sup>1</sup> Anciently, Mount Pentelicus.

*Harold* are clearly due to the peculiar difficulties presented by the Spenserian stanza—the least appropriate metrical form, we may venture to say, which could have been chosen by a poet whose force lay, not in Spenser's long-drawn musical diffuseness of style, but in terseness and rapidity of diction. Perhaps in the gentler scenes the poet appears at his best; he is then less tempted to rhetoric. Such is the following Lake landscape:—

It is the hush of night, and all between  
 Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,  
 Mellow'd and mingling, yet distinctly seen,  
 Save darken'd Jura, whose capt heights appear  
 Precipitously steep ; and drawing near,  
 There breathes a living fragrance from the shore  
 Of flowers yet fresh with childhood ; on the ear  
 Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,  
 Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more.

Let us now pass to a companion picture in Canto iv from Venice, that "fairy city of the heart," as Byron called it in a phrase which must have been in the mind of many English travellers—

The moon is up, and yet it is not night—  
 Sunset divides the sky with her—a sea  
 Of glory streams along the Alpine height  
 Of blue Friuli's mountains ; Heaven is free  
 From clouds, but of all colours seems to be  
 Melted to one vast Iris of the West,  
 Where the Day joins the past Eternity ;  
 While, on the other hand, meek Dian's crest  
 Floats through the azure air—an island of the blest !

A single star is at her side, and reigns  
 With her o'er half the lovely heaven ; but still  
 Yon sunny sea heaves brightly, and remains  
 Roll'd o'er the peak of the far Rhaetian hill.

Byron's enthusiasm for the sea (let me repeat) has been curiously rare among our poets; we have to go back to the

verse before the Conquest to find it painted with the fullness of song, natural, one might say, to Englishmen. The episode which ends *Childe Harold* is splendid for force of diction and varied imagery, yet strangely marred by forced syntax and forced expression. Perhaps the poet's idea is best concentrated in the three beautiful lines—

Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play—  
Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow—  
Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

The Landscape of *Don Juan*, notably in the magnificent shipwreck scene of the second Canto,—almost overwhelming in its forthright, volcanic, force,—ranks with the best of Byron's other work. But it is difficult to disentangle these descriptive elements from the cynical humour which blends in the whole action of that unique poem.

To conclude: Byron's love of landscape was a passion, deep and sincere perhaps as that of any poet. One rendering of this we have already quoted. Let me end with the graceful lines addressed to his justly loved sister, in which also we may note how his energetic mind leads him back perforce to human feeling—

The world is all before me ; but I ask  
Of Nature that with which she will comply—  
It is but in her summer's sun to bask,  
To mingle with the quiet of her sky,  
To see her gentle face without a mask,  
And never gaze on it with apathy.  
She was my early friend, and now shall be—  
My sister—till I look again on thee.

## CHAPTER XV

### *LANDSCAPE IN RECENT POETRY—COLERIDGE, KEATS, SHELLEY*

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834) presents a new, a more complex and difficult problem to us than his four great contemporaries. Every poet's treatment of Nature, we should often remind ourselves, like his treatment of Man, must always and inevitably be governed by his whole character, his heart, and head; what, in brief, was comprehensively named by the Greeks his *ψθος*. Scott, Byron, Keats, offer little analysis of human character, little ethical interpretation of life; nor can any serious validity be justly assigned to Shelley's incoherently eloquent boyish essays in philosophy. But Coleridge, as our lamented W. H. Pater notes, in an admirable sketch,<sup>1</sup> to which I am here indebted, was a "*subtile-souled psychologist*, as "Shelley calls him,"—"that is, a more minute observer "than other men of the phenomena of mind." This habit, when the landscape is concerned, takes the form, Pater remarks, "of a singular watchfulness for the minute fact and ex—" "pression of natural scenery," as if physically piercing to the inner soul of Nature; or, perhaps, in Bishop Berkeley's fashion, almost thinking of the landscape itself, or at least its beauty, as half created by the observing eye and mind; in Coleridge's own phrase—

We receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does Nature live.

Hence, perhaps, his landscape rarely takes the form of descrip-

<sup>1</sup> Ward's *English Poets*, vol. iv.

tion as such ; in exquisite hints and touches it is that we mostly find it ; and hence, also, it is coloured by a peculiar and personal imaginative insight ; has special reference to the human interests which constantly form the poet's subject ; is deeply interfused with vital passion.

A fuller study of Coleridge's poetry is eminently needed than (I fear) it now generally receives, if his genius is to be truly felt. His work, like that of Byron or Shelley, is indeed very unequal ; and the bulk of it has been unduly thrown into shadow by the splendour of two or three masterpieces in the region of eerie glamour, of "delicately marvellous super-'naturalism'"<sup>1</sup>—miracles of "natural magic" and exquisite cadence.<sup>2</sup> No poems since poetry began more completely than these answer the requisites for the imaginative treatment of a story, laid down with admirable judgment and mastery of language by Charles Lamb. The subject of each has so acted upon the poet, "that it has seemed to direct *him*"— "not to be arranged by him. . . . Its leading or collateral "points have impressed themselves [upon him] so tyrannically "that he dare not treat it otherwise, lest he should falsify a "revelation." From the landscape of *Christabel*, the *Mariner*, and *Kubla Khan*, we may first take a few—vignettes rather than pictures—which reflect well the varied weirdness which gives these poems their distinctive tone.

We begin with the opening of the mystic *Christabel*—

The thin gray cloud is spread on high,  
It covers but not hides the sky.  
The moon is behind, and at the full ;  
And yet she looks both small and dull.  
The night is chill, the cloud is gray :  
'Tis a month before the month of May,  
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Pater.

<sup>2</sup> They assuredly love not wisely but too well, who, justly enamoured of these unique lyrics—or of the later verse bequeathed to us by Keats,—think to exalt the Masters by thrusting aside as of little or no worth the rest of their poetry. Strange and illiberal blindness which cannot see that Nature, in the child, ever prefigures the beauty of the maiden ; in the rosebud, the rose ! It was praise such as this which Tacitus immortalised in his terrible *Pessimum inimicorum genus, laudantes*.

With this compare also a later written night scene of two lovers in a wood—

The stars above our heads were dim and steady,  
Like eyes suffused with rapture.

Presently, as the “lovely lady” enters—

There is not wind enough to twirl  
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,  
That dances as often as dance it can,  
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,  
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Both these *Christabel* passages, it should be noticed, are closely founded on Miss Wordsworth’s tenderly felt journals, as shown by Mr. J. D. Campbell in his excellent edition of the Poems.<sup>1</sup>

Now from the *Mariner* on his spellbound voyage—

All in a hot and copper sky,  
The bloody Sun, at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,  
No bigger than the Moon. . . .

The Sun’s rim dips ; the stars rush out :  
At one stride comes the dark ;  
With far-heard whisper, o’er the sea,  
Off shot the spectre-bark.

Again—

—The coming wind did roar more loud,  
And the sails did sigh like sedge ;  
And the rain pour’d down from one black cloud ;  
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still  
The Moon was at its side :

<sup>1</sup> Macmillan, 1893. Beyond praise for the accuracy and research which this volume exhibits, it is impossible not to feel that the publication of the larger portion among the verses now first printed or gathered together (although often biographically interesting) would be injurious to the fame of Coleridge, if, indeed, it could be injured. Burns, Keats, Shelley, and others have suffered similar wrong. Well for the poets of old, who destroyed all their scaffoldings and sketches !

Like waters shot from some high crag,  
The lightning fell with never a jag,  
A river steep and wide.

And in delightful contrast, when the curse is over, and the ship nearing land—

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky  
I heard the sky-lark sing ;  
Sometimes all little birds that are,  
How they seem'd to fill the sea and air  
With their sweet jargoning !

Last, in this region of “dreamy grace” and unrivalled fancy, Coleridge, whether in dream or waking, tells how Kubla Khan decreed his “stately pleasure-dome”—

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round :  
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossom'd many an incense-bearing tree ;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

Beautiful, however, as are these vignettes, his pictorial power, his “shaping spirit,” his penetrative and subtle detail—though inevitably the special glamour of *Christabel* and the *Mariner* be absent—are not less displayed in the English landscape, to which, as a rule, Coleridge’s confines himself. Thus, in the *Fears in Solitude*, we find the scenery of Nether-Stowey—

A green and silent spot, amid the hills,  
A small and silent dell ! O’er stiller place  
No singing sky-lark ever poised himself.  
The hills are heathy, save that swelling slope,  
Which hath a gay and gorgeous covering on,  
All golden with the never-bloomless furze,  
Which now blooms most profusely : but the dell,  
Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate

As vernal corn-field, or the unripe flax,  
 When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve  
 The level sunshine glimmers with green light :—  
 Oh ! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook !

And we may add the impassioned address—

O native Britain ! O my Mother Isle ! . . .  
 There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul  
 Unborrow'd from my country !

Coleridge and Wordsworth, *lucida sidera*, are so closely intertwined in fame, as they were in life, that I cannot here refrain from quoting Wordsworth's companion apostrophe—

Ah ! not for emerald fields alone,  
 With ambient streams more pure and bright  
 Than fabled Cytherea's zone,  
 Glittering before the Thunderer's sight,  
 Is to my heart of hearts endear'd  
 The ground where we were born and rear'd !

Returning to Coleridge, passage on passage of similar beauty brighten the *Frost at Midnight*, the *Ode on Dejection*, the *Eolian Harp*, the *Nightingale*, and the detailed landscape of the Quantock Hills in the lines addressed *To a Young Friend*.

From the powerful, but much overstrained *Ode to France* we take the very imaginative prelude—

Ye Clouds ! that far above me float and pause,  
 Whose pathless march no mortal may controul !  
 Ye Ocean-Waves ! that, whereso'er ye roll,  
 Yield homage only to eternal laws !  
 Ye Woods ! that listen to the night-birds' singing,  
 Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,  
 Save when your own imperious branches swinging,  
 Have made a solemn music of the wind !  
 Where, like a man beloved of God,  
 Through glooms, which never woodman trod,  
 How oft, pursuing fancies holy,  
 My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,

Inspired, beyond the guess of folly,  
By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound !

A largeness of style, a sweep of thought is here, which, with more art, preludes to the landscape of *Childe Harold*. Like that, the note has been seldom heard since. It was inspired by a time of national struggle, alarm, and courage.

Our next example follows that beautiful picture in which Coleridge anticipates the happy education of Nature provided for his son, poor gifted Hartley, closing with a winter scene as he sits by the child's cradle—

—All seasons shall be sweet to thee,  
Whether the summer clothe the general earth  
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing  
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch  
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch  
Smokes in the sun-thaw ; whether the eave-drops fall  
Heard only in the trances of the blast,  
Or if the secret ministry of frost  
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,  
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

Now, again (1802), it is a night scene which he paints, when under the spell of that deep dejection which like a pall overhung this great genius for year on year—

All this long eve, so balmy and serene,  
Have I been gazing on the western sky,  
And its peculiar tint of yellow green :  
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye !  
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,  
That give away their motion to the stars ;  
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,  
Now sparkling, now bedimm'd, but always seen : •  
Yon crescent Moon, as fix'd as if it grew  
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue ;  
I see them all so excellently fair,  
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are !

In its detail, refined, yet broad, truth to nature, and per-

him is seen in her bare simplicity—austere often, sometimes ugly in her nakedness. To quote an excellent criticism by Hazlitt on Hogarth (an artist in some degree analogous to Crabbe), “He was *conformed to this world, not transformed;*” such is our poet’s landscape. A passage upon Pascal by R. W. Church—that master in taste and in style—applies to Crabbe not less than to Wordsworth. Both have “that exact “agreement of word and meaning, that sincerity of the writer “with himself as well as with his readers, *ce consentement de vous “avec vousmême,* out of which, as a principle of composition, “Pascal’s excellence grew.”

The specimen I offer on a subject with which early life had familiarised him, but which poetry had hitherto rarely handled, is more sunny than is the poet’s wont. It is the sea of our Eastern coasts, from *The Borough*, 1810—

Various and vast, sublime in all its forms,  
When lull’d by zephyrs, or when roused by storms ;  
Its colours changing, when from clouds and sun  
Shades after shades upon the surface run ;  
Embrown’d and horrid now, and now serene,  
In limpid blue and evanescent green :  
And oft the foggy banks on ocean lie,  
Lift the fair sail, and cheat the experienced eye.<sup>1</sup>

Be it the Summer noon : a sandy space  
The ebbing tide has left upon its place ;  
Then just the hot and stony beach above  
Light twinkling streams in bright confusion move ;  
(For heated thus, the warmer air ascends,  
And with the cooler in its fall contends)—  
Then the broad bosom of the ocean keeps  
An equal motion ; swelling as it sleeps,  
Then slowly sinking ; curling to the strand,  
Faint, lazy waves o’ercreep the ridgy sand,  
Or tap the tarry boat with gentle blow,  
And back return in silence, smooth and slow.

How curious here, and how characteristic of the period, is

<sup>1</sup> The effect of the *Mirage*, or *Fata Morgana*.

the (wholly prosaic) reference to physical science in the passage on the "warmer air!"

Yet Crabbe, with all his unique power, seems to remain always external to his landscape. He does not, in Bacon's fine phrase, "submit the shows of this world to the desires of "the mind"; deeply as he felt for both Man and Nature, he lacks the harmonising atmosphere of love.

This attitude may be illustrated by another example of Crabbe's landscape. It is a dreary fen-dyke scene which more than once recurs in his poetry—doubtless, a local suggestion from his early East Anglian home—

Beneath an ancient bridge, the straiten'd flood  
Rolls through its sloping banks of slimy mud ;  
Near it a sunken boat resists the tide  
That frets and hurries to the opposing side :  
The rushes sharp, that on the borders grow,  
Bend their brown flowerets to the stream below.

The few dull flowers that o'er the place are spread  
Partake the nature of their fenny bed ;  
Here on its wiry stem, in rigid bloom,  
Grows the salt lavender that lacks perfume ;  
Here the dwarf sallows creep, the septfoil harsh,  
And the soft slimy mallow of the marsh :—  
Low on the ear the distant billows sound,  
And just in view appears their stony bound ;  
No hedge or tree conceals the glowing sun ;  
Birds, save a watery tribe, the district shun,  
Nor chirp among the reeds where bitter waters run.

And, as Crabbe is unjustly neglected in the present day, let me add one more picture, about which that most sensitive judge, Edward Fitzgerald, remarked to Fanny Kemble, "Do "you remember his wonderful *October Day?*"—

Before the Autumn closed,  
When Nature, ere her Winter Wars, reposed :  
When from our Garden, as we look'd above,  
No Cloud was seen, and nothing seem'd to move ;

When the wide River was a Silver Sheet,  
 And upon Ocean slept the unanchor'd fleet :  
 When the wing'd Insect settled in our Sight,  
 And waited wind to recommence her flight.<sup>1</sup>

Fitzgerald's epithet, *wonderful*, is surely justified here !—I have followed his text literally ; he seems to have quoted by memory, or, to enhance the effect, has slightly changed a word or two, and rearranged the order.

John Clare (1793-1864), born and bred in a day-labourer's cottage, a strugger with poverty till his mind failed him, was a "Poet of the Poor" in a sense beyond most who have boasted that title. Yet to this life he owed that close profusion of country images which an inborn tender genius for poetry enabled him to offer. It is pure landscape painting, like that of Keats in youth, though beneath that in power. Such is the landscape of his early *Summer Evening*<sup>2</sup>—

Crows crowd croaking overhead,  
 Hastening to the woods to bed.  
 Cooing sits the lonely dove,  
 Calling home her absent love.  
 With "Kirchup ! Kirchup !" 'mong the wheats,  
 Partridge distant partridge greets. . . .

Bats flit by in hood and cowl ;  
 Through the barn-hole pops the owl ;  
 From the hedge, in drowsy hum,  
 Headless buzzing beetles bum,  
 Haunting every bushy place,  
 Flopping in the labourer's face. . . .

Flowers now sleep within their hoods ;  
 Daisies button into buds ;  
 From soiling dew the butter-cup  
 Shuts his golden jewels up ;

<sup>1</sup> Tales of the Hall, B. xi, *The Maid's Story*.

<sup>2</sup> That very useful book, the *Poets of the Century*, with copious specimens, edited by Mr. A. H. Miles, has supplied me with this and a few other pieces.

And the rose and woodbine they  
Wait again the smiles of day.

This may seem an easy style, almost a mere catalogue. Let those who think so, try ! That delicate minute truth to fact; that pure simple sincerity of touch, and every word in its natural place ; yet the indescribable something that makes poetry, poetry, preserved ; by inborn gift only, not labour ever so strenuous, can this be effected.

But the unhappy poet's best gifts in song came during the twenty years and more of later life which he spent in an asylum. During that long but inevitable imprisonment sanity seems to have returned to him at times ; but accompanied as it was by consciousness of where he was, and why he was there, I know not whether such recovery can be counted gain. No poetry known to me has a sadness more absolute than Clare's asylum songs, reverting with what pathetic yearning to the village scenes of his hard-worked youth ! I gather a few of these pictures from the past ; Clare also is one of the (I fear, too numerous) unjustly slighted—

Aye, flowers ! The very name of flowers,  
That bloom in wood and glen,  
Brings Spring to me in Winter's hours,  
And childhood's dreams again.  
The primrose on the woodland lea  
Was more than gold and lands to me.  
The violets by the woodland side  
Are thick as they could thrive ;  
I've talked to them with childish pride  
As things that were alive :  
I find them now in my distress—  
They seem as sweet, yet valueless.

Then, when early love awoke the heart—

The brook that mirror'd clear the sky—  
Full well I know the spot ;  
The mouse-ear look'd with bright blue eye,  
And said “Forget-me-not.”

And from the brook I turn'd away,  
But heard it many an after day.

Or again—

The sheep within the fallow field,  
The herd upon the green,  
The larks that in the thistle shield,  
And pipe from morn to e'en—  
O for the pasture, fields, and fen !  
When shall I see such rest again ?

Even more sadly tender is *My Early Home*—

Here sparrows build upon the trees,  
And stockdove hides her nest ;  
The leaves are winnow'd by the breeze  
Into a calmer rest ;  
The black-cap's song was very sweet  
That used the rose to kiss ;  
It made the Paradise complete :  
My early home was this. . . .

The old house stoop'd just like a cave,  
Thatch'd o'er with mosses green ;  
Winter around the walls would rave,  
But all was calm within.  
The trees are here all green agen,  
Here bees the flowers still kiss ;  
But flowers and trees seem'd sweeter then—  
My early home was this.

Here, widely unlike from Crabbe, poor Clare's miserable fate has led him to find a strange sympathy with Nature. Even in the madhouse she throws a soothing, a harmonising, almost a healing spell over him.

Charles Whitehead (1804-1862), another forgotten writer, in the *Solitary*, his earliest work (1831), gave a promise unfulfilled by his life, which was wrecked by intemperance. I quote a single landscape scene. This is simply descriptive; beyond what he saw the poet was probably incap-

able of advance ; but I venture to hold it noteworthy among the many sunset and moonrise scenes which poetry has given, for its truth and fullness of detail, yet all mellowed into unity—

An hour, and this majestic day is gone ;  
Another messenger flown in fleet quest  
Of Time. Behold ! one wingéd cloud alone  
Like a spread dragon overhangs the west,  
Bathing the splendour of his crimson crest  
In the sun's last suffusion ;—he hath roll'd  
His vast length o'er the dewy sky, imprest  
With the warm dyes of many-colour'd gold,  
Which, now the sun is sunk, wax faint, and gray, and cold.

• . . . .

And now the Moon, bursting her watery prison,  
Heaves her full orb into the azure clear,  
Pale witness, from the slumbering sea new-risen,  
To glorify the landscape far and near :  
All beauteous things more beautiful appear ;  
The sky-crown'd summit of the mountain gleams  
(Smote by the star-point of her glittering spear)  
More steadfastly ; and all the valley seems  
Strown with a softer light, the atmosphere of dreams.

How still ! as though Silence herself were dead,  
And her wan ghost were floating in the air ;  
The Moon glides o'er the heaven with printless tread,  
And to her far-off frontier doth repair :  
O'er-wearied lids are closing everywhere :—  
All living things that own the touch of sleep  
Are beckon'd, as the wasting moments wear ;  
Till, one by one, in valley, or from steep,  
Unto their several homes they, and their shadows, creep.

We have here the landscape (with some echo of Byron) in its breadth and largeness : a style (let me repeat) which has now become rare, lost often in the precise, varied detail with which modern art and photography have familiarised us.

Ebenezer Elliott (1781-1849) was obviously born with a

true delight in Nature and with some power of observation. But his work as poet was marred—in one way by hasty indifference to finish and concentration, in another by the crude unscrupulous violence with which his political views were rendered : an atmosphere at all times asphyxiating to poetry.

Among his rare successes the little, apparently early, song *To the Bramble Flower* may be quoted ; it is one of the proofs how the spirit at least which inspired Wordsworth was now in the air—

Though woodbines flaunt, and roses glow  
O'er all the fragrant bowers,  
Thou need'st not be ashamed to show  
    Thy satin-threaded flowers :  
For dull the eye, the heart is dull,  
    That cannot feel how fair,  
Amid all beauty beautiful,  
    Thy tender blossoms are ;  
How delicate thy gauzy frill !  
    How rich thy branchy stem !  
How soft thy voice, when woods are still,  
    And thou sing'st hymns to them.

This last touch, though not worked out, has an imaginative quality rare in Elliott's now scantily remembered verse.

The work in poetry of John Keats (1795-1821) falls within the five last years of his short life. Yet it was sufficient, in the repeated judgment of Alfred Tennyson, to allow the belief that, had his days been prolonged, Keats would have proved our greatest poet since Milton.<sup>1</sup> His landscape seems to me of quite equal importance with the human side of his work ; it was, indeed, the region in which he felt that his art, as yet unqualified through youthful inexperience to deal powerfully with human character and interests, attained the highest mastery.

Keats, sharing with Shelley an intense appreciation of

<sup>1</sup> That is, *potentially* above Wordsworth, whose *opus operatum* of eighty years gave him *actually* that place in Tennyson's mind.

Nature, has a music in his verse more solemn, if less aerial. He neither views the landscape through the colours of personal feeling like Byron, nor with Wordsworth thinks of it as allied with human sympathy, or as penetrated by spiritual life, nor, with Shelley, wearies us with a crude pantheism. Hence his pictures are more powerfully true to actuality ; he grasps the scene more vividly, emblazons it more richly : the object, seen in thought, has the salience, the relief, of Nature ; the melody never pausing, and the word the "*inevitable*" word. Hence, what Arnold named his "fascinating felicity."

Although, as we shall note, there is an advance of marvellous rapidity in the clearness and management of his matter, Keats was throughout moved by a few simple impulses. Beauty, with him, as with the Greeks, is the first word and the last of art ; the one quality without which it is not. In this respect, as in his admiration for the classical mythology, Keats was a true son of Hellas. If at first, as he felt and acknowledged, he viewed Beauty too much through its outward sensuous form, yet in truth it was "the mighty abstract idea" of it "in "all things" which inspired him. Nor, even from early days, could Beauty alone enthrall him, or render his soul blind to the perplexing problems of the world. Thus, in the youthful *Sleep and Poetry* he first expresses his joy in the pure aspects of Nature, whilst confessing that a "nobler life" must deal with

The agonies, the strife  
Of human hearts ;

—that this is the true sphere of imagination in her flight through heaven.

Some specimens may now be offered from the first of the poet's three precious little volumes, that published in 1817. Here the freshness of phrase, going straight from his imagination to ours, the absolute sincerity and insight of the descriptive touches, are amazing—they seem almost "rather things than "words." The first is a morning scene—

The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn,  
And fresh from the clear brook ; sweetly they slept

On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept  
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,  
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves :  
For not the faintest motion could be seen  
Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green.

Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight :  
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,  
And taper fingers catching at all things,  
To bind them all about with tiny rings.

Next, we are by a streamlet

Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,  
Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,  
To taste the luxury of sunny beams  
Temper'd with coolness. How they ever wrestle  
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle  
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand.  
If you but scantily hold out the hand,  
That very instant not one will remain ;  
But turn your eye, and they are there again.

Until at last we have

The moon lifting her silver rim  
Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim  
Coming into the blue with all her light.

This, with other English scenes, such as *Calidore*, that romantic sketch in Spenser's style, are all presented in scattered vignettes : the young poet in the abundance of his heart losing sight of wholeness and of reserve ; the wording sometimes defective in taste and stained with mannerisms due to the influence of Leigh Hunt. Keats, to return to the poem already quoted, is led at once by the charm of Nature to find in her what inspired the old poets with the tales of Psyche, Narcissus, and lastly, "that sweetest of all songs," *Endymion*. So early was he fascinated !

Despite the want of sobriety in art strongly felt in these early sketches, yet even at this stage the Sonnet form, as it

were, constrained Keats to paint a landscape perfect in its clearness and unity—

To one who has been long in city pent,  
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair  
And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer  
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.  
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,  
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair  
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair  
And gentle tale of love and languishment?  
Returning home at evening, with an ear  
Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye  
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,  
He mourns that day so soon has glided by :  
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear  
That falls through the clear ether silently.

It is, I hope, not fanciful to suggest, that by this sonnet readers of Dante may be reminded of those in his delightful *Vita Nuova*; they are well-matched in their pure, child-like loveliness.

*Endymion*, published 1818, is much the longest work of Keats, who, with his excellent unfailing candour, described it as "a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished." He has tried to supply through Greek mythology the groundwork which was found in mediaeval romances of chivalry by his favourite Spenser. But he has not Spenser's ideal aim, his deep spirituality; here he rarely gives us more than beauty for beauty's sake. The legend chosen, however, supplied but scanty material. It is not so much the canvas as the framework, upon which he has woven and stretched a scene of splendid embroidery, mostly modern in its tone, though interspersed with colours and forms from the ancient world. *Endymion* altogether hence could only prove a pathless intricacy of story, a Paradise without a plan. It is like that tree painted in the *Faerie Queene*—

Clothéd with leaves, that none the wood mote see,  
And loaden all with fruit as thick as it might be.

A thousand felicities of description are scattered through it, as it were, at random. Yet we find some natural scenes which present more unity. Such is the Song to Pan in Book I, where the first stanza shows the wild wood haunted by the god; the second is a pastoral landscape; in the third the Satyrs and Fauns appear; the fourth records Pan's useful ministry to man, with some glimpse at the inner meaning of Nature and her influence over the soul. Similar in style is the bower of Adonis, within which he is found by Venus. Her approach I must quote—

Lo ! the wreathéd green  
Disparted, and far upward could be seen  
Blue heaven, and a silver car, air-borne,  
Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of morn  
Spun off a drizzling dew.

What poet, dealing with this poet's theme, favourite since Grecian days, has imagined it more exquisitely? Presently Endymion is brought again into the presence of his Love—

It was a jasmine bower, all bestrown  
With golden moss. His every sense had grown  
Ethereal for pleasure; 'bove his head  
Flew a delight half-graspable.

Even Coleridge, in his visionary poems, has not exceeded the magical beauty of this last phrase. Yet it does not touch the spiritual note of *Christabel*.

But we must, lastly, pass on to the picture of the world undersea, which may be fairly set beside Clarence's dream in *Richard the Third*, and Panthea's vision in *Prometheus Unbound*, Act iv. Keats here at twenty-two takes his place by Shakespeare and Shelley—

Far had he roam'd,  
With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd  
Above, around, and at his feet . . .  
Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large  
Of gone sea-warriors; brazen beaks and targe;  
Rudders that for a hundred years had lost

The sway of human hand ; gold vase emboss'd  
With long forgotten story, and wherein  
No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin  
But those of Saturn's vintage ; mouldering scrolls,  
Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls  
Who first were on the earth ; and sculptures rude  
In ponderous stone, developing the mood  
Of ancient Nox ; then skeletons of man,  
Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan,  
And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw  
Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe  
These secrets struck into him.

The tropical rapidity of growth in the mind of Keats, and of his command over poetry, is almost as noteworthy as his affluence. His last volume (1820) holds nearly all his finest work—the work through which he lives in the world's memory. In this embarrassment of riches, my selections must be brief, must be inadequate. The tale of *Isabella* has perfect little touches of landscape, of which one, rendered in a beautiful though perhaps a misplaced figure, has been justly celebrated by Ruskin. The treacherous brothers are speaking—

“ To-day we purpose, ay, this hour we mount  
“ To spur three leagues towards the Apennine ;  
“ Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count  
“ His dewy rosary on the eglantine.”

Now, the sad heroine's despair—

She forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,  
And she forgot the blue above the trees,  
And she forgot the dells where waters run,  
And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze ;  
She had no knowledge when the day was done,  
And the new morn she saw not. . . .

One stanza must be also given from the splendid *Ode to the Nightingale* ; it clearly marks the poet's greater mastery, as his few months went by, of simplicity and reserve—

---

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalméd darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;  
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves ;  
And mid-May's eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Two more landscape poems remain, so perfect in style, so vividly and accurately presenting their scenes, so beautiful in their unity, that it would be hard to find anywhere more memorable masterpieces of art. Yet neither here nor elsewhere in Keats do we seem to trace any distinct *interpretation* of Nature. The invocation to Fancy may fairly be placed only second, in due distance, to the *Allegro* in its peculiar style, in its sweet music. Such is the power of Fancy (he says), that she brings all the seasons as it were before the soul at once as in some enchanted garden—

Thou shalt hear  
Distant harvest-carols clear ;  
Rustle of the reapéd corn ;  
Sweet birds antheming the morn :  
And, in the same moment—hark !  
'Tis the early April lark,  
Or the rooks, with busy caw,  
Foraging for sticks and straw.  
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold  
The daisy and the marigold ;  
White-plumed lilies, and the first  
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst ;  
Shaded hyacinth, alway  
Sapphire queen of the Mid-May ;  
And every leaf, and every flower  
Pearléd with the self-same shower.  
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep  
Meagre from its celléd sleep ;

And the snake all winter-thin  
Cast on sunny bank its skin ;  
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see  
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,  
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest  
Quiet on her mossy nest ;  
Then the hurry and alarm  
When the bee-hive casts its swarm ;  
Acorns ripe down-pattering,  
While the autumn breezes sing.

More serious in its dainty melancholy is the Ode to Autumn ; English to the heart, yet Greek in its simple perfect personification, its penetrative yet never over-accented reality—

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spares the next swath and all its twinéd flowers :  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook ;  
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

After these poems, *Hyperion*, taken altogether, has doubtless an artificial air in its sonorous Miltonism. It was also impracticable as a subject, and Keats knew that he was right in leaving it as a fragment, after attempting in vain to remodel it.<sup>1</sup> But the landscape with which it opens is not affected by these errors in the scheme ; certainly, since Milton himself, we have nothing equal, I should say, to its union of grandeur and tenderness. This poem, it may be hoped, is too familiar to need repetition ; I will quote only the lines that follow the words of sympathy which Saturn, fallen from his place among the gods, hears from Thea—

<sup>1</sup> It was printed, say the publishers, "contrary to the wish of the author," and is not named on the title-page.

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As when, upon a trancéd summer-night,  
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,  
Tall oaks, branch-charméd by the earnest stars,  
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,  
Save from one gradual solitary gust  
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,  
As if the ebbing air had but one wave ;  
So came these words and went.

The character of Keats has been often misunderstood. But if I judge him rightly, the modesty of his nature,—so eminently healthy and sane, before his mortal illness,<sup>1</sup>—the beauty and sincerity of his soul, with the promise of his intellectual advance, answered fully to his gifts in song. Let us then end this notice with a few words on the landscape from a letter written by the great and unhappy poet in his last illness—even his verse could hardly have bettered it. He turns to Nature, but with what a pathos, with how deeper a human feeling, than in his youth !—

How astonishingly does the chance of leaving the world impress a sense of its natural beauties upon me ! Like poor Falstaff, though I do not “babble,” I think of green fields ; I muse with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy—their shapes and colours are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy. It is because they are connected with the most thoughtless and the happiest moments of our lives. I have seen foreign flowers in hothouses, of the most beautiful nature, but I do not care a straw for them. The simple flowers of our Spring are what I want to see again.

With Keats we naturally place Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). Between those adorers who have done their very best to deprive this poet of that fame which his unique gifts deserve, and those who have refused justice to them, the task before us is uncomfortable and perilous. Happily, Shelley's

<sup>1</sup> I do not forget the extravagances of expression in the letters written to his bride during his dying months. Yet it should always be remembered that under these phrases lies a love, deep and pure as has been recorded of any poet.

treatment of Nature—his landscape would be too limiting a word—in those instances where he has concentrated his mind upon his object, I should myself hold, as in the case of Keats, on the whole, his most precious achievement in poetry. Here Nature supplied him (to take a phrase from Coleridge) with that “body of thought” which is so largely absent from the bulk of his verse.

This is not the time, nor should the writer wish anyhow to be the person, to attempt a general criticism upon Shelley. Yet some words must be hazarded ; the poet, as Wordsworth said, like the cloud in heaven—

Moveth altogether if it move at all.

And Shelley's landscape is inevitably limited and dyed by the colours of his mind. Without adopting M. Arnold's judgment that Shelley's prose will prove his permanent memorial, I must here (with all due respect and apology) make the confession, probably unpopular, reached after long reluctance, that no true poet of any age has left us so gigantic a mass of wasted effort, exuberance so Asiatic, such oceans (to speak out) of fluent, well-intended platitude—such ineffectual beating of his wings in the persistent effort to scale heights of thought beyond the reach of youth ;—youth closed so prematurely, so lamentably.<sup>1</sup> Hence the difference between Shelley's best and what is not best is enormous ; the sudden transition from mere prose rendered more prosaic by its presentation in verse, to the most ethereal and exquisite poetry, frequent ; and hence, also, it is in his shorter and mostly later lyrics that

<sup>1</sup> Let any who revolt against these remarks honestly attempt to read *aloud* to the end the *Queen Mab*, the *Revolt of Islam*, the *Witch of Atlas*, and the *Prometheus Unbound*. They may agree with Shelley's sentiments upon the problems of life ; they may, and justly, sympathise with the poet's unfailing wish to remedy the “world's wrong” ; they will, lastly, rejoice in the (comparatively few) flowers scattered through the desert ; yet, supposing the task completed, the jury will, I think, remit the extreme penalty of the law to the present offending critic. Page after page in Coleridge's earlier poetry is essentially, perhaps, not on a higher level than I have here ventured to assign to much of Shelley's work. But Coleridge has had the better fortune to escape that “tribe of a man's enemies,” omnivorous adorers, who cannot recognise that great genius may not be always, or, if his life be short, even often, equal to itself.

we find Shelley's very finest, uniquest, most magically delightful work. Yet even here at times the matter is attenuated as the film of the soap-bubble, gaining through its very thinness its marvellous iridescent beauty. "Shelley seems to go up and "burst," was Tennyson's remark on a passage of this character.<sup>1</sup>

Gladly I now turn to the poet's landscape. In its best moods, where he has focussed his eye on his object, it has that strange power of vitalising abstractions and things of Nature on which Macaulay has commented in his brilliant manner. One might almost say of Shelley that his Pantheism—if that schoolboy philosophy deserve the name—his Pantheism inspires and infuses itself throughout his verse; the *Anima Naturae*, at least, seems always before and within the poet. And this may perhaps be rated his special contribution to our subject.

We must not look in his landscape for human feeling inter-fused as in Coleridge's, for the chord of true passion, or of the humanly pathetic, Shelley could scarcely strike; nor, again, for Nature moralised and spiritualised as by Wordsworth; Shelley's landscape is essentially descriptive, but raised to a life of its own by an imaginative power of perhaps unsurpassed pure vividness, and that personifying habit which we have just

<sup>1</sup> As Arnold's depreciation of Shelley's poetry has been mentioned, it may be of interest to quote a fragment from his prose. It describes the Baths of Caracalla at Rome as he saw them. Antiquarian zeal has now denuded the ruin into a lean and frightful skeleton.

"Never was any desolation more sublime and lovely. The perpendicular wall of ruin is cloven into steep ravines filled up with flowering shrubs, whose thick twisted roots are knotted in the rifts of the stones. At every step the aerial pinnacles of shattered stone group into new combinations of effect, and tower above the lofty yet level walls, as the distant mountains change their aspect to one travelling rapidly along the plain. . . . The blue sky canopies it, and is as the everlasting roof of these enormous halls. . . .

"Come to Rome. It is a scene by which expression is overpowered; which words cannot convey. Still further, winding up one half of the shattered pyramids, by the path through the blooming copsewood, you come to a little mossy lawn [upon the roof of a still vaulted chamber], surrounded by the wild shrubs; it is overgrown with anemones, wall-flowers, and violets, whose stalks pierce the starry moss, and with radiant blue flowers, whose names I know not, and which scatter through the air the divinest odour, which, as you recline under the shade of the ruin, produces sensations of voluptuous faintness, like the combinations of sweet music."

noticed. But it will speak clearly for itself, often in such brief hints as we found also in Coleridge.

Our first specimens are from the earliest of the longer poems in which Shelley distinctly reveals his power, the *Alastor*, dated December 1815. This vision, in beautifully modulated blank verse, is finished with much care. Yet, as a whole, like *Endymion* (written at the same age), it is a youthful wilderness of dreamy beauty, a musical maze, held together by that strange intensity of feeling which, however, is hardly able to reach reality or to touch the heart. I will quote a few of its scattered landscape glimpses.

The Wanderer himself<sup>1</sup> is described as one whose

Wan eyes  
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly  
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.

Two beautifully simple similes may follow. The first is of a distant mountain—

—Vast Aornos, seen from Petra's steep,  
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud.

Now of a stream—

On the polish'd stones  
It danced, like childhood laughing as it went.

More ornate is the figure in which Shelley describes the tropical forests on a mountain side, where

Far below  
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,  
The ash and the acacia floating hang  
Tremulous and pale.

And once the tangled scene of what are sometimes rather landscape materials than a landscape itself, is resolved into a noble picture, which has received just praise from Ruskin. *Alastor* is traversing a mountain ravine—

<sup>1</sup> In this sense Shelley apparently understood *Alastor*, properly the *Avenger*.

With rapid steps he went  
 Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow  
 Of the wild babbling rivulet ; and now  
 The forest's solemn canopies were changed  
 For the uniform and lightsome evening sky. . . .

On every side now rose  
 Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,  
 Lifted their black and barren pinnacles  
 In the light of evening. . . .

Lo ! where the pass expands  
 Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,  
 And seems, with its accumulated crags,  
 To overhang the world : for wide expand  
 Beneath the wan stars and descending moon  
 Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,  
 Dim tracks and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom  
 Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills  
 Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge  
 Of the remote horizon.

*Prometheus Unbound.* Rare in this confusing play, curiously and utterly remote from the magnificent simplicity of Aeschylus, are the strokes of genuine natural description amidst its vague unreal splendour, which too often sinks into what is hardly above prosaic verbiage. But from this Shelley at times rises with a bird-like bound into his characteristic aerial beauty. I will first give two scenes of dawning—

The point of one white star is quivering still  
 Deep in the orange light of widening morn  
 Beyond the purple mountains : through a chasm  
 Of wind-divided mist the darker lake  
 Reflects it : now it wanes : it gleams again  
 As the waves fade, and as the burning threads  
 Of woven cloud unravel in pale air.

Methought among the lawns together  
 We wander'd, underneath the young gray dawn,  
 And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds

Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains  
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind.

What a touch, shall we say, of anthropomorphism, of conscious life at least, is in that *unwilling!*

Then a noble mountain view—

Hark ! the rushing snow !  
The sun-awaken'd avalanche ! whose mass,  
Thrice sifted by the storm, had gather'd there  
Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds  
As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth  
Is loosen'd, and the nations echo round,  
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

At last Prometheus is freed, and Earth paints the new paradise of the world—

Meanwhile

In mild variety the seasons mild  
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,  
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,  
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's  
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain  
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,  
Shall clothe the forests and the fields, ay, even  
The crag-built deserts of the barren deep,  
With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.

This passage presents rather a beautiful catalogue of landscape forms than a realised picture ; it is an example of Shelley's *Fata Morgana* manner. Presently we have a few lines, delightful in their more definite quality, which tell of the

—budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms  
Which star the winds with points of coloured light,  
As they rain through them, and bright golden globes  
Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven.

The oppressive monotony of the *Cenci*—that weird monument of power misapplied—is broken by one picture, noble through its intensity rather than from special felicity of phrase. It is put in the mouth of the unhappy Beatrice,

when she has just decided on the death of her infamous father—a deed to which such a scene of gloom is a fitting prologue. This is one of Shelley's best sustained landscape passages—

I remember

Two miles on this side of the fort, the road  
Crosses a deep ravine ; 'tis rough and narrow,  
And winds with short turns down the precipice ;  
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,  
Which has, from unimaginable years,  
Sustain'd itself with terror and with toil  
Over a gulf, and with the agony  
With which it clings seems slowly coming down ;  
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour  
Clings to the mass of life ; yet, clinging, leans ;  
And, leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss  
In which it fears to fall. Beneath this crag,  
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,  
The melancholy mountain yawns. Below,  
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent  
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge  
Crosses the chasm ; and high above there grow,  
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,  
Cedars, and yews, and pines ; whose tangled hair  
Is matted in one solid roof of shade  
By the dark ivy's twine. At noonday here  
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

We now reach Shelley's later and shorter lyrics. Much I must pass by, including the well-known *Cloud* and *Arethusa*. For these elaborate pictures, despite the effective phrases which Shelley, so to speak, could not escape, do seem to me, on the whole, pieces rather of lively, even over-fluent, rhetoric than penetrated by his own special genius. This Phaethon could not always control his steeds! Yet much is left of magical beauty. Among these little songs lies his choicest work—"winged words" in an almost literal sense, so lightly and aerially do they seem to have floated into verse and music; flowers of a Paradise above earth, yet remote from heaven. The landscape painted is external to us ; of the pleasure it can

give it is not conscious ; it is not shown as sympathising with man ; but it has a strange life of its own. Such is the address to the Moon, short indeed, yet complete and perfect—

Art thou pale for weariness  
Of climbing heaven, and gazing on the earth,  
Wandering companionless  
Among the stars that have a different birth,—  
And ever-changing, like a joyless eye  
That finds no object worth its constancy ?

The Garden of the *Sensitive Plant* is in a strangely alluring mystical vein, with a rhythm and music (I have often fancied) all its own. Here the poet paints

—The pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,  
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,  
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,  
Till they die of their own dear loveliness.  
  
And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,  
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,  
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen  
Through their pavilions of tender green.

While on the stream

Broad water lilies lay tremulously,  
And starry river-buds glimmer'd by,  
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance  
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

The note here audible, as we have said, is Shelley's peculiar contribution to landscape poetry, though how exactly to name it—whether personifying Animism, or Pantheistic—I know not. It is a note that pervades the whole *Ode to the West Wind* ; perhaps the most powerful of his pictures from Nature, the most finished, the most satisfying in its unity—

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,  
 Pestilence-stricken multitudes : O thou,  
 Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed  
 The wingéd seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
 Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
 Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow  
 Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
 (Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
 With living hues and odours plain and hill :  
 Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere ;  
 Destroyer and preserver ; hear, Oh hear !

Partial quotation, however, does this great lyric wrong. Turn now to a pure simple picture, drawn for its own sake, in which Nature in her abundance has, if we may risk the phrase, restrained the "wild poet" within the bounds of actuality. It is a Venetian landscape as seen from the Euganean Hills—

Beneath is spread like a green sea  
 The waveless plain of Lombardy,  
 Bounded by the vaporous air,  
 Islanded by cities fair ;  
 Underneath day's azure eyes  
 Ocean's nursling, Venice lies.

Then the panorama changes—

Noon descends around me now :  
 'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,  
 When a soft and purple mist  
 Like a vaporous amethyst,  
 Or an air-dissolvéd star  
 Mingling light and fragrance, far  
 From the curved horizon's bound  
 To the point of heaven's profound,  
 Fills the overflowing sky ;  
 And the plains that silent lie  
 Underneath ; the leaves unsodden  
 Where the infant frost has trodden  
 With his morning-wingéd feet,

Whose bright print is gleaming yet ;  
And the red and golden vines,  
Piercing with their trellis'd lines  
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness ;  
The dun and bladed grass no less,  
Pointing from this hoary tower  
In the windless air ; the flower  
Glimmering at my feet ; the line  
Of the olive-sandall'd Apennine  
In the south dimly islanded ;  
And the Alps, whose snows are spread  
High between the clouds and sun ;  
And of living things each one ;  
And my spirit, which so long  
Darken'd this swift stream of song,  
Interpenetrated lie  
By the glory of the sky :  
Be it love, light, harmony,  
Odour, or the soul of all  
Which from heaven like dew doth fall,  
Or the mind which feeds this verse  
Peopling the lone universe.

This long quotation is justified by its delicate beauty ; who, that has seen Lombardy, but must recognise the truth of that beautiful epithet, the *olive-sandall'd Apennine*? But a further reason is, that the last lines give (I think) as near an approach as Shelley himself could make to his conception of what underlies all Nature—of the *Anima Mundi*.

But this attempt—too long, yet not long enough—to set forth Shelley's landscape may be closed by that one which, to my mind, is the most charmingly perfect in its simplicity and clearness of presentation. It is the *Recollection* of the pine woods near Pisa—

We paused beside the pools that lie  
Under the forest bough ;  
Each seemed as 'twere a little sky  
Gulph'd in a world below ;  
A firmament of purple light,

Which in the dark earth lay,  
 More boundless than the depth of night,  
     And purer than the day—  
 In which the lovely forests grew  
     As in the upper air,  
 More perfect both in shape and hue  
     Than any spreading there.  
 There lay the glade and neighbouring lawn,  
     And through the dark-green wood  
 The white sun twinkling like the dawn  
     Out of a speckled cloud.  
 Sweet views which in our world above  
     Can never well be seen,  
 Were imaged by the water's love  
     Of that fair forest green.  
 And all was interfused beneath  
     With an Elysian glow,  
 An atmosphere without a breath,  
     A softer day below.

To the most modern phase of landscape in poetry, yet with a quality which brings him into a certain relation with Shelley, belongs Arthur O'Shaughnessy (1844-81); that gifted, unhappy youth, who, in delicate metrical skill and melody of words, in my eyes, stands second to Tennyson only during the last half century; whilst he is also high in pure imaginative faculty, wasted as it often was on doleful dreams and extravagant fantasies. He took Nature, if I may use the word, into his soul like a mistress; although known to him solely through books, he was intoxicated with tropical scenery. Thus he is voyaging to the *Azure Islands*—

I reach them as the wave wanes low,  
     Leaving its stranded ores,  
 And evening floods of amber glow  
     And sleep around their shores :—

There his soul dwells in ecstasy—

It plunges through some perfumed brake,  
     Or depth of odorous shade

That walls and roofs a dim hush'd lake,  
Where endless dreams have stay'd ;  
And there it takes the incarnation  
Of some amphibious blossom,  
And lies in long-drawn contemplation  
Buoy'd on the water's bosom.

O gorgeous Erumango ! isle  
Or blossom of the sea !  
Often, some long enchanted while,  
Have I been part of thee ;  
Part of some saffron hue that lingers  
Above thy sapphire mountains ;  
One of thy spice-groves' full-voiced singers ;  
One of thy murmuring fountains.

Or he is in the "country of the palm," where

Long red reaches of the cane,  
Yellow winding water-lane,  
Verdant isle and amber river  
Lisp and murmur back again :

Many thousand years have been,  
And the sun alone hath seen  
Like a high and radiant ocean,  
All the fair palm-world in motion ;  
But the crimson bird hath fed  
With its mate of equal red,  
And the flower in soft explosion  
With the flower hath been wed.

And its long luxuriant thought  
Lofty palm to palm hath taught,  
While a single vast liana  
All one brotherhood hath wrought,  
Crossing forest and savannah.

What a strange visionary rapture is this ! and yet, how true to botanical fact ; note the "soft explosion" of anthers when the seed is ripe for fertilisation. It finds a parallel, if

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anywhere, in the *Sensitive Plant* of Shelley—an artist of larger scope indeed, yet hardly more ecstatically imaginative.

Unlike as the two poets are, Chaucer was not more devoted to humanity as his subject than O'Shaughnessy. His landscape art, except in the poem inspired by tropical scenery, has but one conspicuous example, written seemingly toward the close of his life, just before that happy marriage which death ended soon and left him miserable. From this piece, describing a visit to "yet unspoil'd" Lynmouth, I quote a few stanzas, the clear, the imaginative simplicity of which may tempt some to the work of that poet who, among those of recent years, seems to me one of those most unjustly neglected—

I have brought her I love to this sweet place,  
Far away from the world of men and strife,  
That I may talk to her a charméd space,  
And make a rich long memory in my life.

Around my love and me the brooding hills,  
Full of delicious murmurs, rise on high,  
Closing upon this spot the summer fills,  
And over which there rules the summer sky.

Behind us on the shore down there the sea  
Roars roughly, like a fierce pursuing hound ;  
But all this hour is calm for her and me ;  
And now another hill shuts out the sound.

And now we breathe the odours of the glen,  
And round about us are enchanted things ;  
The bird that hath blithe speech unknown to men,  
The river keen, that hath a voice and sings :—

The tree that dwells with one ecstatic thought,  
Wider and fairer growing year by year ;  
The flower that flowereth and knoweth nought,  
The bee that scents the flower and draweth near.

Had he lived to pursue and perfect this simpler style, O'Shaughnessy might have reached an acceptance more worthy of his singular genius.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *THE LANDSCAPE OF WORDSWORTH*

WE now reach the first of those two illustrious poets, who for England's lasting and priceless benefit carried on their art, in this century, to an age rarely granted man ; while by the time of Wordsworth's death his work in poetry, I firmly hold, had placed him, then (for Tennyson's highest height was not yet reached), next in succession to Milton. But whether this opinion find assent or rejection, it should be remembered how many of our most gifted poets just preceding Wordsworth were cut down in youth. It is by the harvest—the *opus operatum*—the magnificent breadth and range—that he actually left us, not by what may have been the inborn genius, the natural power bestowed, that I am here venturing to measure him :

largior hic campos aether et lumine vestit  
purpureo.

Through his lifetime runs an under-current of belief in his superiority amongst his great brethren in verse—Scott, Shelley, Coleridge, Keats, even Byron ; they all seem to recognise him as the eldest brother ; they know that he is the head of the family.<sup>1</sup>

The scenery in which William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was born, bred, and wherein he mostly spent his long life—that of the English Lake region—passed as it were into his very soul, and forms a very large portion of his pictures and

<sup>1</sup> Here and elsewhere quotations have been made from former attempts of my own in criticism of poetry.

his teachings from Nature. The landscape of the five contemporaries just named, with the peculiar gifts of each, I have tried briefly to set forth. Great as has been the range and the splendid quality of their work—great as also that of Wordsworth's successors who remain for later notice—I yet venture to place him at the head of English, indeed of the world's poet-landscapists ; his verse, in this respect, may be regarded as the consummation of the whole mighty effort from Homer's days to our own. What, then, are Wordsworth's special characteristics in this field ? By virtue of what gifts does he deserve the throne ? It is a difficult and complex task to give a distinct answer, and I must beg leave to take some space for the attempt.

Wordsworth has himself defined in the Preface to the *Excursion*, in his letters, and, above all, in the *Prelude*, his attitude towards Nature ; and to these materials I shall mainly trust.

His childhood at once reveals that magnificent gift of imagination, in which, as Coleridge notes, he was “nearest of “ all modern writers to Shakespeare and Milton, yet in a kind “ perfectly unborrowed and his own.”<sup>1</sup> But, as coexisting and working with this imagination, I would also name the singular intenseness of his sensibility. And this quality itself, possibly, was intensified by virtue of the very fact that he descended from a long line of north country landholders, retaining hence throughout life no small share of Norse qualities—the iron in the blood, a certain austerity, even rigidity, of nature. By this infusion, I would argue, his native sensitiveness was deepened and concentrated, as the hardest substances are fused only by the greatest heat. And perhaps to the Northern blood and ancient traditions of life surviving in those valleys, we might ascribe that stately yet kindly reserve which still, in old age, when I had the privilege of meeting him, marked his demeanour, and was sometimes misinterpreted into mere personal vanity—a weakness from which Wordsworth, I should judge, was essentially free. He was indeed isolated in mind, self-absorbed by nature ; yet it is a mistake to describe

<sup>1</sup> From that strange farrago of genius, the *Biographia Literaria*, ch. xxii.

him as indifferent to contemporary genius. With that sensitive imagination (into which we lesser men can perhaps but dimly enter), unbalanced or unregulated in early years by the actualities of life, he tells us he felt the reality of the soul so strongly, and grasped it so personally, that the outer world, the phenomena of Nature, even death itself, appeared to him like a dream. "I was often unable," he writes, "to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or a tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality."<sup>1</sup> Shadowy and inevitably transient as these strange influences of the childish imagination were, they doubtless lay at the root of that peculiarly spiritual tone in which Wordsworth always looked on the world. Nature, as he rambled about in his school-days, gave him at first only a "pure organic pleasure"; presently came flashing gleams of deeper thought:—As when wandering at night he says—

Moon and stars  
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,  
And seem'd to be a trouble to the peace  
That dwelt among them.

Or when, moving away, over the nearer hills

—A huge peak, black and huge,  
As if with voluntary power instinct,  
Upear'd its head.

Or, soon after, when upon a rock in Windermere a boy was fluting—

Oh, then, the calm  
And dead still water lay upon my mind  
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky

<sup>1</sup> Let me compare these words with a passage from Cardinal Newman's *Apologia*. Speaking of himself as a schoolboy: "I thought life might be a dream, or I an Angel, and all this world a deception, my fellow-angels by a playful device concealing themselves from me, and deceiving me with the semblance of a material world."

Never before so beautiful, sank down  
Into my heart, and held me like a dream !

Gradually Nature “was sought for her own sake”; he tells us—

I felt the sentiment of Being spread  
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still :

To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,  
Even the loose stones that cover the high-way,  
I gave a moral life : I saw them feel,  
Or link'd them to some feeling.

Or, varying the phrase, he marked

The presences of Nature in the sky  
And on the earth ; the Visions of the hills,  
And souls of lonely places ;

till, in the sublime stanza of *Hart-Leap Well* (already quoted), Wordsworth reached the full expression of that thought which ever underlay and spiritualised the landscape to him—

The Being, that is in the clouds and air,  
That is in the green leaves among the groves,  
Maintains a deep and reverential care  
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.<sup>1</sup>

That mysterious truth, the Divine Omnipresence, incomprehensible as it must always be to man's narrowly limited intellect, was surely never shadowed forth in words of greater force and beauty.

With this habit of mind Wordsworth approached the land-

<sup>1</sup> It was in a similar, though a markedly Pantheistic vein, that Coleridge in 1795 wrote—

What if all of animated nature  
Be but organic harps diversely framed,  
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps  
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,  
At once the Soul of each, and God of all ?

But in his next paragraph the poet repudiates the thought as “dim and unhallow'd.”

scape ; finding thus a true bond between Nature and man's heart—a pre-ordained secret harmony one might almost call it. Natural beauty and grandeur, the terror and the calm, he saw, could teach moral lessons to the candid and feeling soul : encouraging, warning, and, perhaps above all, calming the soul—a phase of Wordsworth's influence which has been admirably dwelt on by M. Arnold. These thoughts dominated his work. "Every great poet," he said, "is a "teacher"; and as such he wrought through his many years, having "an invincible confidence that my writings . . . will, "in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, "and happier;"<sup>1</sup> raising us, as the poet most akin to him in soul said, to holier things—*ad altiora erigens*.

Wordsworth's supreme success in landscape poetry, in truth, has often led to a mis-estimate of his work, defined by himself as

The mind of man :

My haunt, and the main region of my song ;

or, again, in the proud phrase—

Men as they are men within themselves.

So far from being the mere "poet of the Lakes," none of our singers between Shakespeare and himself has, in fact, with such a deep philosophy grasped and presented so many among the elementary problems of life. And it is precisely that humanity interfused in the landscape, with its wild inhabitants, which has made him its profoundest, most sympathetic, most beautiful interpreter.

This spiritualising vision shows itself throughout his scenes from Nature. Like his great contemporary in painting, Turner, what he gives is never the *copy*, always the *idea* of his object.<sup>2</sup> Through the colours of his own intelligence, of his own heart's blood, it is that he views first, and then makes us view, every scene. He has put what he felt and aimed at into verse when he remarks

How exquisitely . . .

The external world is fitted to the mind ;

<sup>1</sup> Letter of May 21, 1807.

<sup>2</sup> J. Brown, *Horae Subsecivae*.

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And the creation (by no lower name  
Can it it be call'd) which they with blended might  
Accomplish.

Or, again, in a more rapt mood, we find the same sentiment in the well-known yet mysterious lines—

The gleam,  
The light that never was, on sea or land,  
The consecration, and the Poet's dream.

Such vision, however, we must feel is obviously given but to few minds. It was this man's special inspiration. And hence to many readers Wordsworth's attitude has seemed and will always seem, too subtle and too limited to self. Indeed, we might perhaps say, with due reverence towards a man so great and so sincere, that his feeling about Nature, absolutely true as it was to him, is yet in its deepest moods, too peculiarly his own, to be grasped and rightly valued without an effort. He eminently needs a sympathetic mind, if we would receive all he can give—rise as it were upon his wings. Here and there, in truth, I think he has forced his spiritual, ideal, aspect of Nature almost too far. Few can seriously accept a doctrine such as

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can—

even from one who is himself unquestionably among the sagest, the most helpful, of the world's philosophic thinkers in verse. But he never lapsed into the extravagance of Shelley's unbridled imagination when, speaking of Mont Blanc, he cries

Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal  
Large codes of fraud and woe.

Hence, also, Wordsworth has no representative followers in verse ; none have learned his secret ; he has no one anywhere like himself through all the centuries of landscape in poetry. And hence it was, that his precious legacy to our literature and our souls has not been model, but impulse.

Before I attempt to illustrate by examples this general sketch of Wordsworth's attitude as poet-painter, let us briefly note also the scope and method of the artist in his actual work—pass, as it were (if I do not weary by this convenient analogy), from the mysteries of the studio to the easel and the canvas.

Wordsworth in his youth, he tells us, already felt a "consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances "which have been unnoticed by the poets of any age or "country, and I made a resolution to supply in some measure "the deficiency." Thus he, with Turner, whose art lay "in "the silent poesy of Form" (to quote from Dean Church's admirable essay, to which I am here greatly indebted),<sup>1</sup> "seized "and grasped what had always been visible yet never seen, "and gave their countrymen capacities of perception and "delight hardly yet granted to others." Hence Wordsworth's immensely extensive range of scene, even within a limited district. A mind such as his found itself at home, whether with landscape description upon a largescale, or the lyric devoted to a single object; he had what Schiller called the gift of "widening nature without going beyond it." And thus also he has both foreground and far-off detail at command, with an almost unrivalled accuracy and abundance;—not restricted, by preference, as we sometimes find other poets, to one focus of view. "He seems always to have been before one in "observation of natural fact," was once Alfred Tennyson's remark to me. Of course his work is unequal; "like his own "skylark, he soars to the heavens, and drops into a lowly nest ; ". . . the wing sometimes flags, and the eye is wearied, . . ." "and there was sometimes want of proportion in his subject "and his treatment of it."<sup>2</sup> Yet even in his least successful pieces, it is very rare that the largeness and elevation of his aim shall not be perceptible, as I once ventured to say—

Confess the failings as we must,  
The lion's mark is always there.

Passionate devotion to truth guided that wealthy imagina-

<sup>1</sup> Ward's *Selections*.

<sup>2</sup> R. W. Church.

tion—the ideal with him always rests upon the real, or rather is the real transfigured. “I have at all times,” he says, “en-“ deavoured to look steadily at my subject.” And this penetrating gaze he rendered in the most direct language: “An “austere purity and plainness and nobleness marked all that “he wrote, and formed a combination as distinct as it was “uncommon.”<sup>1</sup> Through this habit of clear directness, when at his best, he has a concise felicity in words approaching as nearly that of his favourite, Horace, as in an uninflected language is possible. In a phrase which exemplifies its own meaning, he also has added many “jewels five words long” to our language. As Coleridge said of another friend, Wordsworth gives us “truths plucked as they are growing, and delivered to “us with the dew on them.”<sup>2</sup>

Enough, however, of preface on a subject so difficult, a genius so unique, that all I can hope is that my words have not darkened my matter. The examples now to be given have been mostly arranged in order of date, with the object always in view of illustrating what we have dwelt on as Wordsworth’s special aims and gifts toward the interpretation of Nature.

His first published poem, the *Evening Walk* (1787-89), is almost too rich in its fine accurate detail. This is the picture of Grasmere lake at even—

Into a gradual calm the breezes sink,  
A blue rim borders all the lake’s still brink ;  
There doth the twinkling aspen’s foliage sleep,  
And insects clothe, like dust, the glassy deep :  
And now, on every side, the surface breaks  
Into blue spots, and slowly lengthening streaks ;  
Here, plots of sparkling water tremble bright  
With thousand thousand twinkling points of light ;  
There, waves that, hardly weltering, die away,  
Tip their smooth ridges with a softer ray ;  
And now the whole wide lake in deep repose  
Is hush’d, and like a burnish’d mirror glows.

The *Descriptive Sketches* (1791-92), written on a walking

<sup>1</sup> R. W. Church.

<sup>2</sup> *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, 1888.

tour among the Alps, show a decided advance both in general power and in the references made to human life and character. This advance is seen whether he describes the Chartreuse, then desecrated by the revolutionists, or Lakes Como and Maggiore, or where

Via Mala's chasms confine  
The indignant waters of the infant Rhine :

or how the Swiss peasant

—holds with God himself communion high,  
There where the peal of swelling torrents fills  
The sky-roof'd temple of the eternal hills ;  
Or when, upon the mountain's silent brow  
Reclined, he sees, above him and below,  
Bright stars of ice and azure fields of snow ;  
While needle peaks of granite shooting bare  
Tremble in ever-varying tints of air.

No wonder if Coleridge, judging these little poems with the insight of a congenial imagination, wrote : "Seldom, if ever, " was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the " literary horizon more evidently announced."

After an interval during which Wordsworth's mind was preoccupied and distressed by the political agitation of those troubled years, the full stream of his poetry began to flow with swift golden brilliancy. He seems to me to have first thoroughly found himself, in relation whether to man or to the landscape, in the *Lines written near Tintern*—an admirable example of that "impassioned contemplation" assigned to him by Mr. Pater. In this poem, passing by those earliest feelings, when external existence appeared inherent in the soul, he paints the enormous joy his youth found in Nature, in her peace-bestowing influence especially ; how then

The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion : the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite ; a feeling and a love,

The cypress and her spire ;  
—Of flowers that with one scarlet gleam  
Cover a hundred leagues, and seem  
To set the hills on fire.

The Youth of green savannahs spake,  
And many an endless, endless lake,  
With all its fairy crowds  
Of islands, that together lie  
As quietly as spots of sky  
Among the evening clouds.

Extracts, however, are often mutilations. One whole lyric we will therefore give, in which Wordsworth with such exquisitely skilful tact, pathos so refined, has summarised what he held Nature can do for Man—while professing simply to tell the story of a maiden's life (and she, only known through this and a few other lovely poems)—that I doubt if there be anything parallel to it in literature—

Three years she grew in sun and shower,  
Then Nature said, “A lovelier flower  
On earth was never sown ;  
This Child I to myself will take ;  
She shall be mine, and I will make  
A Lady of my own.

“ Myself will to my darling be  
Both law and impulse : and with me  
The Girl, in rock and plain,  
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,  
Shall feel an overseeing power  
To kindle or restrain.

“ She shall be sportive as the fawn  
That wild with glee across the lawn,  
Or up the mountain springs ;  
And her's shall be the breathing balm,  
And her's the silence and the calm  
Of mute insensate things.

“ The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her ; for her the willow bend ;

Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motions of the Storm  
Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form  
By silent sympathy.

"The stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her ; and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place  
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face.

"And vital feelings of delight  
Shall rear her form to stately height,  
Her virgin bosom swell ;  
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give  
While she and I together live  
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—  
How soon my Lucy's race was run !  
She died, and left to me  
This heath, this calm, and quiet scene ;  
The memory of what has been,  
And never more will be.

I have here presented much, yielding to the pleasure of traversing such fields of beauty, and fearing they may be little known to too many. And should any reader cry, *Halt!* *Enough!*—let me remind him that we are here in presence of the more than Claude,—the absolute Master of Landscape in Poetry. Yet we have not touched one half of Wordsworth's landscape triumphs. Such are the mountain scenes in *Michael*, *The Brothers*, in the *Prelude* and *Excursion*. From this poem let me quote a specimen of what has been mentioned as Wordsworth's large style of design. It is a sunset among the Lake hills—

Already had the sun,  
Sinking with less than ordinary state,  
Attain'd his western bound ; but rays of light—  
Now suddenly diverging from the orb

Retired behind the mountain tops, or veil'd  
 By the dense air—shot upwards to the crown  
 Of the blue firmament—aloft, and wide :  
 And multitudes of little floating clouds,  
 Through their ethereal texture pierced—ere we,  
 Who saw, of change were conscious—had become  
 Vivid as fire ; clouds separately poised,—  
 Innumerable multitude of forms  
 Scatter'd through half the circle of the sky ;  
 And giving back, and shedding each on each,  
 With prodigal communion, the bright hues  
 Which from the unapparent fount of glory  
 They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.<sup>1</sup>

The singular mystical beauty of a short lyric on the Highland Glen traditionally held the burial-place of the sad primeval bard, Ossian, was long since impressed on me by that devoted and admirable Wordsworth scholar, J. C. Shairp. May I render my gratitude even now to him for much aid, by here presenting the lines? These are headed, *Glen-Almain*; or, *The Narrow Glen*—

In this still place, remote from men,  
 Sleeps Ossian, in the narrow glen ;  
 In this still place, where murmurs on  
 But one meek streamlet, only one :  
 He sang of battles, and the breath  
 Of stormy war, and violent death ;  
 And should, methinks, when all was past,  
 Have rightfully been laid at last  
 Where rocks were rudely heap'd, and rent  
 As by a spirit turbulent ;  
 Where sights were rough, and sounds were wild,  
 And everything unreconciled ;  
 In some complaining, dim retreat,  
 For fear and melancholy meet ;

<sup>1</sup> The identity in style between this picture in words and those which Turner at the same period put into colour, is a very remarkable proof how the same impulses may work at once, yet independently, in the minds of gifted contemporaries. There is a similar relation between Giotto and Dante.

But this is calm ; there cannot be  
A more entire tranquillity.

As a contrast take Wordsworth's lines to his infant daughter :

—This happy Creature of herself  
Is all-sufficient, solitude to her  
Is blithe society, who fills the air  
With gladness and involuntary songs.  
Light are her sallies as the tripping fawn's  
Forth-startled from the fern where she lay couch'd ;  
Unthought-of, unexpected, as the stir  
Of the soft breeze ruffling the meadow-flowers,  
Or from before it chasing wantonly  
The many-colour'd images imprest  
Upon the bosom of a placid lake.

Yet another landscape region opens before us in the Sonnets. *The Westminster Bridge*, *The Sea*, *The Two Voices*, *The World too much with Us*, are especially famous. But a pair less known are eminently characteristic in their peculiar originality—each, one might almost say, alike tremulous with a delicate tenderness of feeling and of phrase eminently Wordsworth's own. Such is the warning to travellers not to covet homes in places of unspoiled beauty—

Well may'st thou halt—and gaze with brightening eye !  
The lovely Cottage in the guardian nook  
Hath stirr'd thee deeply ; with its own dear brook,  
Its own small pasture, almost its own sky !

But covet not the Abode ; forbear to sigh,  
As many do, repining while they look ;  
Intruders—who would tear from Nature's book  
This precious leaf, with harsh impiety.

Think what the home must be if it were thine,  
Even thine, though few thy wants !—Roof, window, door,  
The very flowers are sacred to the Poor,  
The roses to the porch which they entwine :  
Yea, all, that now enchant thee, from the day  
On which it should be touch'd, would melt away.

*Almost its own sky*—how finely felt is this stroke ! It is a vignette by Turner (whose genius comes constantly into mind when Wordsworth is before us) in words.

Now a companion sonnet, written when age was near, on the Inner Landscape—

Most sweet it is with unuplifted eyes  
To pace the ground, if path be there or none,  
While a fair region round the traveller lies  
Which he forbears again to look upon ;

Pleased rather with some soft ideal scene,  
The work of Fancy, or some happy tone  
Of meditation, slipping in between  
The beauty coming and the beauty gone.

If Thought and Love desert us, from that day  
Let us break off all commerce with the Muse :  
With Thought and Love companions of our way,  
Whate'er the senses take or may refuse,  
The Mind's internal heaven shall shed her dews  
Of inspiration on the humblest lay.

From the *Duddon* series I extract a beautiful specimen of Wordsworth's peculiar power in revealing unexpected lessons of Nature. With what felicity does the sound represent the sense in the eighth line !

Ere yet our course was graced with social trees  
It lack'd not old remains of hawthorn bowers,  
Where small birds warbled to their paramours ;  
And, earlier still, was heard the hum of bees ;

I saw them ply their harmless robberies,  
And caught the fragrance which the sundry flowers,  
Fed by the stream with soft perpetual showers,  
Plenteously yielded to the vagrant breeze.

There bloom'd the strawberry of the wilderness ;  
The trembling eyebright show'd her sapphire blue,  
The thyme her purple, like the blush of Even ;

And if the breath of some to no caress  
Invited, forth they peep'd so fair to view,  
All kinds alike seem'd favourites of Heaven.

The next, another example of that rarity, the perfect Sonnet, was much admired by M. Arnold—

Wansfell !<sup>1</sup> this Household has a favour'd lot,  
Living with liberty on thee to gaze,  
To watch while Morn first crowns thee with her rays,  
Or when along thy breast serenely float  
Evening's angelic clouds. Yet ne'er a note  
Hath sounded (shame upon the Bard !) thy praise  
For all that thou, as if from heaven, hast brought  
Of glory lavish'd on our quiet days.  
Bountiful Son of Earth ! when we are gone  
From every object dear to mortal sight,  
As soon we shall be, may these words attest  
How oft, to elevate our spirits, shone  
Thy visionary majesties of light,  
How in thy pensive glooms our hearts found rest.

This sonnet, which is among Wordsworth's latest pieces, may be an example of what one of our ablest recent thinkers has remarked, that the perception of men of deep and philosophical mind is "not dulled by the commonness and constancy of the "fact, as inferior ones are, but ever retaining something of a "first surprise."<sup>2</sup>

Thus far our course has chiefly lain amongst Wordsworth's earlier poetry. His later landscape offers less variety, less brilliant felicity in diction ; in which we should, however, note that his first somewhat too narrow laws of language have fallen out of sight. But we now find a noble sunset glow, a sweet, calm maturity of feeling, a wider sweep of reflection : In his own beautiful words—

No fears to beat away—no strife to heal—  
The past unsigh'd for, and the future sure.

<sup>1</sup> "The hill that rises to the south-east, above Ambleside."

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Mozley, *Doctrine of Predestination* (1883).

His was an eminently healthy nature ; alive not only to the charm but to the virtue of joyfulness ; too strong to walk in the melancholy gloom familiar to feeble minds—nay, by modern writers in a “ subjective ” age favoured often simply as the easiest, the most fruitful atmosphere for poetry.

By the name *Lycoris*, in the ode to his wife, with which this essay may be concluded, Wordsworth (he tells us) reverted with pleasure to the great poets of old, and here, especially to Horace, the finished beauty of whose lyrics, as already has been noticed, he justly appreciated, and often reproduced—

In youth we love the darksome lawn  
Brush'd by the owlet's wing ;  
Then, Twilight is preferr'd to Dawn,  
And Autumn to the Spring.  
Sad fancies do we then affect,  
In luxury of disrespect  
To our own prodigal excess  
Of too familiar happiness.  
*Lycoris* (if such name befit  
Thee, thee my life's celestial sign !)  
When Nature marks the year's decline,  
Be ours to welcome it ;  
Pleased with the harvest hope that runs  
Before the path of milder suns ;  
Pleased while the sylvan world displays  
Its ripeness to the feeding gaze ;  
Pleased when the sullen winds resound the knell  
Of the resplendent miracle.

But something whispers to my heart  
That, as we downward tend,  
*Lycoris* ! life requires an *art*  
To which our souls must bend ;  
A skill—to balance and supply ;  
And, ere the flowing fount be dry,  
As soon it must, a sense to sip,  
Or drink, with no fastidious lip.  
Then welcome, above all, the Guest  
Whose smiles, diffused o'er land and sea,

Seem to recall the Deity  
 Of youth into the breast :  
 May pensive Autumn ne'er present  
 A claim to her disparagement !  
 While blossoms and the budding spray  
 Inspire us in our own decay ;  
 Still, as we nearer draw to life's dark goal,  
 Be hopeful Spring the favourite of the Soul !

But of these sunset songs I cannot now offer more examples. Let me leave the noble poet with one remark :—If poetry, as I should hold, of all human studies, is the one by which the soul most advances in the highest regions, Wordsworth is among the few who, from Homer to his day, are our best guides upward.

Wordsworth, although, as we have noted, a genius and character so uniquely gifted, could form no representative followers, or, as Coleridge finely said, “be imitated except by ‘those who are not born to be imitators,’” profoundly affected many of our poets in different directions, yet always in the way of truth to Nature, ideality of treatment, sincerity, feeling refined and thoughtful.

Among these we may first place Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847), a poet whose singular beauty of nature and true instinct for his art were not always adequately rendered in his verse—

#### *FLOWERS*

Yes ; there is heaven about you : in your breath  
 And hues it dwells. The stars of heaven ye shine ;  
 Bright strangers in a land of sin and death,  
 That talk of God, and point to realms divine. . . .

Ye speak of frail humanity : ye tell  
 How man, like you, shall flourish and shall fall :—  
 But ah ! ye speak of Heavenly Love as well,  
 And say, the God of flowers is God of all. . . .

Sweet flowers, sweet flowers ! the rich exuberance  
 Of Nature's heart in her propitious hours :

When glad emotions in her bosom dance  
 She vents her happiness in laughing flowers. . . .

Childhood and you are playmates ; matching well  
 Your sunny cheeks, and mingling fragrant breath :—  
 Ye help young Love his faltering tale to tell ;  
 Ye scatter sweetness o'er the bed of Death.

Here it is noteworthy how feeling, more intense, more tender, than the high-minded poet's words could fully render, has personified Nature, though with a method of his own.

What we have noticed about Lyte in some degree applies to John Keble (1792-1866). With him also thought at times outruns expression ; whence it doubtless was that Wordsworth wished he could have rewritten the *Christian Year*. Keble, however, has a deeper strain of thought than Lyte ; he is in closer harmony with Wordsworth ; and the rare fragments of landscape which his train of subjects has admitted are worthy of the Master—true to Nature, dignified, instinct with serious thought and feeling. Two contrasted scenes may be offered—

Where is Thy favour'd haunt, Eternal Voice,  
 The region of Thy choice,  
 Where, undisturb'd by sin and earth, the soul  
 Owns Thine entire control ?—  
 'Tis on the mountain's summit dark and high,  
 When storms are hurrying by :  
 'Tis 'mid the strong foundations of the earth,  
 Where torrents have their birth.

No sounds of worldly toil ascending there  
 Mar the full burst of prayer ;  
 Lone Nature feels that she may freely breathe,  
 And round us and beneath  
 Are heard her sacred tones : the fitful sweep  
 Of winds across the steep,  
 Through wither'd bents—romantic note and clear,  
 Meet for a hermit's ear ;  
 The wheeling kite's wild solitary cry,  
 And, scarcely heard so high,

The dashing waters, when the air is still,  
From many a torrent rill  
That winds unseen beneath the shaggy fell,  
Track'd by the blue mist well :  
Such sounds as make deep silence in the heart,  
For Thought to do her part.

---

Red o'er the forest peers the setting sun,  
The line of yellow light dies fast away  
That crown'd the eastern copse : and chill and dun  
Falls on the moor the brief November day.

Now the tired hunter winds a parting note,  
And Echo bids good-night from every glade ;  
Yet wait awhile, and see the calm leaves float  
Each to his rest beneath their parent shade.

How like decaying life they seem to glide !  
And yet no second spring have they in store,  
But where they fall forgotten to abide  
Is all their portion, and they ask no more.

Soon o'er their heads blithe April airs shall sing,  
A thousand wild-flowers round them shall unfold,  
The green buds glisten in the dews of Spring,  
And all be vernal rapture as of old.

Two very delicately imagined sonnets by poor Hartley Coleridge (1796-1849) are worthy of a child so poetically nursed and of such high but vain parental hopes. The second in its peculiar feeling for accurate detail resembles C. Tennyson's manner—

#### *TO A FRIEND*

When we were idlers with the loitering rills,  
The need of human love we little noted :  
Our love was nature ; and the peace that floated  
On the white mist, and dwelt upon the hills,  
To sweet accord subdued our wayward wills :  
One soul was ours, one mind, one heart devoted,—  
That, wisely doating, ask'd not why it doated,

And ours the unknown joy, which knowing kills.  
 But now I find, how dear thou wert to me,  
 That man is more than half of nature's treasure,  
 Of that fair beauty which no eye can see,  
 Of that sweet music which no ear can measure :—  
 And now the streams may sing for others' pleasure,  
 The hills sleep on in their eternity.

### NOVEMBER

The mellow year is hastening to its close ;  
 The little birds have almost sung their last,  
 Their small notes twitter in the dreary blast—  
 That shrill-piped harbinger of early snows ;  
 The patient beauty of the scentless rose,  
 Oft with the Morn's hoar crystal quaintly glass'd,  
 Hangs,—a pale mourner for the summer past,  
 And makes a little summer where it grows :  
 In the chill sunbeam of the faint brief day  
 The dusky waters shudder as they shine,  
 The russet leaves obstruct the straggling way  
 Of oozy brooks, which no deep banks define ;  
 And the gaunt woods, in ragged, scant array  
 Wrap their old limbs with sombre ivy twine.

The sonnets of Sir Aubrey de Vere (1788-1846) were spoken of by Wordsworth as "among the most perfect of our 'age.' That on *The Sea-Cliffs of Kilkee* has pictorially clear detail, wedded to true unity of delineation—

Awfully beautiful art thou, O sea !  
 View'd from the vantage of those giant rocks  
 That vast in air lift their primeval blocks,  
 Skreening the sandy cove of lone Kilkee.  
 Cautious, with out-stretch'd arm, and bended knee,  
 I scan the dread abyss, 'till the depth mocks  
 My straining eyeballs, and the eternal shocks  
 Of billows rolling from infinity  
 Disturb my brain. Hark ! the shrill sea-birds' scream !  
 Cloud-like they sweep the long wave's sapphire gleam,  
 Ere the poised Ospray stoops in wrath from high.

Here Man, alone, is nought ; Nature supreme,  
Where all is simply great that meets the eye—  
The precipice, the ocean, and the sky.

Ebenezer Jones (1820-60) : As a companion poem to this powerful sea-piece, may be set another scene of not less accurate power, and not less characteristic of modern poetry,—by a writer of unfulfilled promise. It is part of a *Winter Hymn to the Snow*—

Come o'er the hills, and pass unto the wold,  
And all things, as thou passest, in rest upfold,  
Nor all night long thy ministrations cease ;  
Thou succourer of young corn, and of each seed  
In plough'd land sown, or lost on rooted mead,  
And bringer everywhere of exceeding peace !

Beneath the long interminable frost  
Earth's landscapes all their excellent force have lost,  
And stripp'd and abject each alike appears :  
Not now to adore can they exalt the soul,—  
Panic, or anger, or unrest control,—  
Or aid the loosening of Affliction's tears . . .

The mountains soar not, holding high in heaven  
Their mighty kingdoms, but all downward driven  
Seem shrunken haggard ridges running low :  
And all about stand drear upon the leas  
Like giant thorns, the frozen skeleton trees,  
Dead to the winds that ruining through them go. . . .

Come ! Daughter fair of Sire the sternest, come,  
And bring the world relief ! to rivers numb  
Give garments, cover broadly the broad land ;  
All trees with thy resistless gentleness  
Assume, and in thine own white vesture dress,  
And hush all nooks with thy persistings bland.

There is here a singular originality, a fine observation of natural effect. Note also how, as in de Vere's sonnet, the force with which the scene has been felt has rendered some personification of the landscape, as it were, inevitable. We

have seen the same impulse in Shelley, in whose hands it rises to sublimity.

By that perfect artist and eminently original poet, Coventry Patmore, is a second Winter scene, wholly different, yet equally true, while more deeply imaginative—

I, singularly moved  
To love the lovely that are not beloved,  
Of all the Seasons, most  
Love Winter, and to trace  
The sense of the Trophonian pallor on her face.  
It is not death, but plenitude of peace ;  
And the dim cloud that does the world enfold  
Hath less the characters of dark and cold  
Than warmth and light asleep ;  
And correspondent breathing seems to keep  
With the infant harvest, breathing soft below  
Its eider coverlet of snow.  
Nor is in field or garden anything  
But, duly look'd into, contains serene  
The substance of things hoped for, in the Spring,  
And evidence of Summer not yet seen.

Often, in sheltering brakes,  
As one from rest disturb'd in the first hour,  
Primrose or violet bewilder'd wakes,  
And deems 'tis time to flower :  
Though not a whisper of her voice he hear,  
The buried bulb does know  
The signals of the year,  
And hails far Summer with his lifted spear.

Patmore's fine fancies here recall Henry Vaughan and his nature-details, so curiously observed, so deeply significant.

A place of its own must be given to the landscape of J. C. Shairp (1819-85), than whom, of Scotland's many faithful sons, none was more devoted to her,—nay, perhaps, almost too exclusively. No one, if we put aside Ossian, known to me, has felt or rendered so deeply the gloom, the sublime

desolation of the Highland region. That overpowering sense of weight and grandeur which calls forth the inward cry to the mountains to cover us, as we pass beneath some vast precipice, in truth, was always with Shairp. He has not his beloved Wordsworth's mastery, his brightness of soul, his large philosophy of Nature ; nor, in the region of art, Wordsworth's fine finish, his happiness of phrase : the minor key dominates.—But, united with great delicacy of sentiment and touch, he has the never-failing charm of perfect high-hearted sincerity ; and if we reflect on the long-lasting hatred or indifference which mountain lands have met from poetry, Shairp, so far as his skill served, merits a high place in characteristically modern verse.

It is this aspect of Nature which the poet ascribes to a young wanderer in the West Highlands—

On his spirit solemn awe  
Fell when, the summit won, he saw  
To westward Knoydart peaks up-crowd,  
Scarr'd, jagg'd, black-corried<sup>1</sup>—some in cloud,  
Some by slant sunbursts glory-kiss'd,—  
Beyond—through fleeces broad of mist,  
Like splinter'd spears, weird peaks of Skye ;  
And many an isle he could not name,  
That looming into vision came  
From ocean's outer mystery.<sup>2</sup>

Now, the desolate moor of Rannoch—

Yea ! a desert wide and wasted,  
Wash'd by rain-floods to the bones ;  
League on league of heather blasted,  
Storm-gash'd moss, gray boulder-stones :  
And along these dreary levels,  
As by some stern destiny placed,  
Yon sad lochs of black moss water  
Grimly gleaming on the waste,  
East and west and northward sweeping  
Limitless the mountain plain,

<sup>1</sup> Cut into hollows.

<sup>2</sup> *Glen Dessoray*, Canto iii, 2 (1888).

Browning, as was natural to his peculiarly fixed temperament, his powerful overruling idiosyncrasy, remained singularly unchanged throughout his long career. Yet it is singular that *Pauline*, the remarkable poem which he wrote at twenty (1832), has a freedom of touch, a breadth, in its landscape, a "joy in "the world's loveliness," which, it has been truly said,<sup>1</sup> never returned to him. With this also is a certain simplicity in style, too infrequent in his work, due, perhaps, to his deep early devotion to Keats and Shelley.

Thus, addressing the imagined lady of the song—

Thou wilt remember one warm morn, when Winter  
Crept aged from the earth, and Spring's first breath  
Blew soft from the moist hills—the black-thorn boughs,  
So dark in the bare wood, when glistening  
In the sunshine were white with coming buds,  
Like the bright side of a sorrow—and the banks  
Had violets opening from sleep, like eyes.

Something of *Alastor*, passionately admired by Browning, is here also audible. Yet one finds something, too, of his own later manner.

As the poem pursues its mystical course, setting forth obscurely Browning's youthful inner experiences of thought and feeling, a kind of panorama is given. It is a landscape, built "in thought," to which he invites Pauline, whom I take to be a figure of Browning's beloved sister, somewhat idealised—

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path  
Between the sullen river and the woods  
Waving and muttering, for the moonless night  
Has shaped them into images of life,  
Like the uprising of the giant-ghosts,  
Looking on earth. . . .

Day and noon follow; then—

See this our new retreat  
Wall'd in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs,  
Dark, tangled, old and green, still sloping down

<sup>1</sup> W. Sharp, *Browning*, 1890.

To a small pool whose waters lie asleep  
Amid the trailing boughs turn'd water-plants :  
And tall trees overarch to keep us in,  
Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts. . . .

Whilst, in the pools—

Old gray stones lie making eddies there ;  
The wild-mice cross them dry-shod :

a line in which we pass at once from Shelley to Browning. One or two more scenes follow. But my extracts may give a sufficient example of this youthful work. Like Tennyson's *Lover's Tale*, *Pauline* was unwillingly admitted into his later edition by Browning, conscious of its evident immaturity. There is, indeed, little of his maturer sharply outlined presentation of single objects, or of those "electric flashes," by which he often lights up the scene. Yet we have also that simple "joy in the world's loveliness," which he never regained.

After first youth, his style, his choice of subjects, his metres, show no intrinsic development, except that from the date of *The Ring and The Book* (1868-69) the touch becomes less refined, the metre and music less harmonious. During the earlier and better period, the landscape, though dramatically varied as the subject of the poem may demand, thenceforward was long mainly Italian, though with an undercurrent of English vignettes. The youthful poem *Paracelsus* shows at how early a date Browning's foreground preference asserted itself, in a river scene on the Mayne, which is in effect a minute catalogue of stream-side plants and wild creatures. And similar in style and manner is the powerful picture of Spring in the same poem—

Earth is a wintry clod :  
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltriss, passes  
Over its breast to waken it ; rare verdure  
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between  
The wither'd tree-roots and the cracks of frost,  
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;  
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms

Like chrysalids impatient for the air ;  
The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run  
Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;  
Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark  
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;  
Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls  
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe  
Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek  
Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews  
His ancient rapture !

These lines illustrate the inherent difficulty of the style. It is only the very last words that, by their noble force, give a kind of unity to a scene of scattered though able and piercing detail. But in general the poet, as he advanced in skill, although conquering this tendency to piecemeal effect, confined himself to admirably penetrating single vignettes, rather than offered a presentation of the landscape in full.

My examples shall be taken from what I have ventured to call Browning's better period ; and the first shall be an Eastern landscape from *Saul*. David is soothing the king's agonised spirit with music—

—I first play'd the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,  
So docile they come to the pen-door, till folding be done.  
They are white and untormented by the bushes, for lo, they have fed  
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed ;  
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star  
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far !

The sudden transition here, from the narrative structure of the first two lines to the song itself, is exquisitely imagined. It is, in truth, Vergil's device in the *Silenus Eclogue*.<sup>1</sup>

*O si sic omnia !* what a higher, what a probably more

<sup>1</sup> See the lovely song of the ancient Mythes—

namque canebat uti magnum per inane coacta  
semina ; . . .

Till from bare narrative it bursts into the passionate exclamation about  
Pasiphaë—  
ah virgo infelix ! . . .

durable place in poetry would this poet hold, had he often, as here, united music and beauty to his own splendid special powers ! As it is, constantly and sadly does he bring to mind the deep-felt saying of Keats—

Strength alone, though of the Muses born,  
Is like a fallen angel.

*By the Fireside*, certainly one of Browning's most successful lyrics, supplies an Italian Monte Rosa scene, such as perhaps he only could paint. The poet and his wife are climbing the hillside in view of a ruin. Then—

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things ;  
The woods are round us, heap'd and dim ;  
From slab to slab how it slips and springs—  
The thread of water single and slim,  
Through the ravage some torrent brings !  
  
Does it feed the little lake<sup>1</sup> below ?  
That speck of white just on its marge  
Is Pella ; see, in the evening-glow,  
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge  
When Alp meets Heaven in snow.

Presently the ruin is reached—

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge  
That takes the turn to a range beyond,  
Is the chapel reach'd by the one-arch'd bridge  
Where the water is stopp'd in a stagnant pond  
Danced over by the midge.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,  
Blackish-gray and mostly wet ;  
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.  
See here again, how the lichens fret  
And the roots of the ivy strike !

Poor little place, where its one priest comes  
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,  
To the dozen folk from their scatter'd homes,

<sup>1</sup> Lago d' Orta.

Gather'd within that precinct small  
 By the dozen ways one roams—  
 To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,  
 Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,  
 Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,  
 Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread  
 Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

There has been, we find, some little question between these two "hearts at leisure"; now they find that Nature has accomplished her work in harmonising their souls—

The forests had done it; there they stood;  
 We caught for a second the powers at play:  
 They had mingled us so, for once and for good;  
 Their work was done—we might go or stay,  
 They relapsed to their ancient mood.

In the *Englishman in Italy* Browning has concentrated a wealth of foreground detail amazing in its truth of touch; in its nearness it seems to lean out of the canvas; every word here also the right word, yet right for presentation of the image, rather than for poetry. The outline, as often with Browning, is too hard; in that fine phrase of Sir J. Reynolds, which may be here again applied to poetry, it is not sufficiently "lost in the ground"—the picture partially fails in breadth and unity. After many keen glances at South Italian life, the poet leaves the plain of Sorrento to climb the ridge—

And soon we emerged  
 From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow;  
 And still as we urged  
 Our way, the woods wonder'd, and left us,  
 As up still we trudged  
 Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,  
 And place was e'en grudged  
 'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones  
 Like the loose broken teeth  
 Of some monster which climb'd there to die  
 From the ocean beneath.

. . . . .

Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement !  
Still moving with you ;  
For, ever some new head and breast of them  
Thrusts into view  
To observe the intruder ; you see it  
If quickly you turn  
And, before they escape, you surprise them.

The cleverness displayed in this poem is amazing, but incessant : the effects are isolated : the sense of effort, the want of relief, of reserve, at last makes itself felt. Hence, perhaps, despite Browning's fluent copiousness, he rarely succeeds in giving the delightful sense of genuine spontaneity.

The lively *Home thoughts from abroad* must be left to memory. For my last example (many reluctantly passed by) I have reserved the passage which for clear sheer power perhaps Browning never equalled again, wherein the storm breaks over two sinful lovers—

Buried in woods we lay. . . .  
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead,  
And ever and anon some bright white shaft  
Burnt thro' the pine-tree roof, here burnt and there,  
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen  
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,  
Feeling for guilty thee and me : then broke  
The thunder like a whole sea overhead.

Browning's Protean range of subject, his wonderfully fruitful fancy, include also the fantastic and the weird. In this style, however, he differs widely from Coleridge's delightful fantasies. If indeed we once think of the *Mariner* or *Christabel*, Browning in too much of his lyrical work will seem without musical ear, strident and jerking in his metres ; indifferent even to charm, so that he can reach—as often he does reach—vivid force, fullness of effect. His poems suffer accordingly : the whole orchestra not seldom is out of tune. The *Grammarians Funeral* with marvellous power paints a mountain ascent, but the very idea of Song almost disappears in the discordant metre, and those ingeniously odious double rhymes

which were ever one of Browning's besetting temptations. Nor need we quote the dismal fancies of the landscape in *Childe Roland*, imaginative, yet without charm or defined purpose. But the details of bird and insect life in *Caliban*, equally forcible, have their fit place in that brilliantly effective and original grotesque monodrama ; while it would obviously be absurd to ask Caliban for the music of Ariel. Take the imp's narrative of Creation—

Thinketh, He made the sun ; this isle ;  
 Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing,  
 Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech ;  
 Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,  
 That floats and feeds ; a certain badger brown  
 He<sup>1</sup> hath watch'd hunt with that slant white-wedge eye  
 By moonlight ; and the pie with the long tongue  
 That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,  
 And says a plain word when she finds her prize,  
 But will not eat the ants. . . .  
 . . . He made all these and more,  
 Made all we see, and us, in spite.

To sum up our imperfect sketch of this strangely interesting poet, perplexing, disappointing, and fascinating, Browning is confessedly and above all a teacher, whether directly, or when he offers us his superb gallery of semi-dramatic characters and situations—semi-dramatic, or rather, perhaps, intended to be such. For, everywhere, among all sorts and conditions of men and things, how seldom does Browning—despite his disclaimers—escape from Browning !<sup>2</sup> Often, one might say,

<sup>1</sup> Caliban himself.

<sup>2</sup> As a crucial illustration of this criticism, compare two terrible tragic moments, very similar in situation.

In the final lines of *The Ring and the Book*, Guido, after calling upon the holiest names, invokes the wife whom he has murdered in the passionate appeal—

*Pompilia, will you let them murder me ?*

The poor girl who is the heroine of Mrs. Inchbald's *Nature and Art*, when suddenly recognising in the Judge, now about to pronounce the death-sentence, her seducer in youth, screams in her agony—

*Oh, not from you !*

if he has one eye upon his subject, the other is on himself. Hence, I suppose, many as are the scenes of passion which he has given, one note, last and sweetest—the note of disinterested love—is found all too rarely. These idiosyncrasies inevitably more or less suffuse his landscape. With its many peculiar merits, it rarely seems able to touch the inner soul of Nature herself; it lacks charm; hardly ever is the verse musical, never enchanted:—unique, indeed, to the core; yet not leaving the heart wholly satisfied.

Although the powerful classical bias, both in regard to thought and form, wherein Matthew Arnold (1822-88) was more akin to Gray than any of our poets since his time, has doubtless impeded his popularity, yet these qualities give Arnold his peculiar charm, his individual note, his high value to sympathetic readers. His verse has everywhere the characteristic Greek signs—lucidity of thought, unity in design, reserve, fine taste, with propriety in choice of metre, crystal clearness in diction. If a certain coldness be sometimes felt, it is due to that over-didactic tendency,<sup>1</sup> that want of disinterested feeling, which Arnold, in most ways so opposed, shares with Browning; nor was his overstrained value for criticism, of all pure literary forms the most transient, without a damping effect on his own poetry.

These conditions, of course, colour Arnold's landscape. It is limited in range, reaching its admirable successes almost always in the idyllic style. His conception of the scene is transparently accurate; the pictures presented have much variety, and are always in due harmony with the subject. The under-sea world in his lovely *Forsaken Merman* comes before our eyes not less convincingly than

Both phrases are sublime. But Browning's is elaborately contrived to break on us like a thunder-clap; it is *theatrically* dramatic, and hence, self-conscious; Mrs. Inchbald's is very near Shakespeare in its appalling simplicity; those four little words go straight to the heart.

<sup>1</sup> Here also Arnold's uneasy sceptical bias which (if the figure may be allowed) held history, politics, theology in fluctuating solution within his mind, and at times expressed itself in a certain despairing sadness, intervenes. But my purpose does not require that this side of his work should be more than referred to.

The white-wall'd town,  
And the little gray church on the windy shore.

The landscape is also purely Greek in its lucid painting by few words ; to borrow a phrase of his, its “near and flashing plainness.” Yet it hardly forms more than a background to human figures ; like the landscapes of the *Anthology*, whilst enlarged and enriched in modern fashion, no moral or inner interpretation is drawn by the poet, or intended. Arnold’s manner was fixed from the first ; if I quote freely, it is a tribute to the peculiar charm of his work.

First we give the singularly noble river landscape which closes the *Sohrab and Rustum* ; that skilfully written Persian tale which, however, hardly does justice to its deeply tragic motive. It is a night scene by the Oxus ; Rustum is watching by the son whom he has unwittingly slain—

But the majestic river floated on,  
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved  
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,  
Under the solitary moon ;—he flow'd  
Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè,  
Brimming, and bright, and large ; then sands begin  
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
And split his currents ; that for many a league  
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along  
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—  
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,  
A foild circuitous wanderer—till at last  
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide  
His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars  
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral sea.

With similar skill in Arnold’s *Strayed Reveller*—

The Scythian  
On the wide stepp, unharnessing  
His wheel'd house at noon—

with other Oriental vignettes is set before us—rich in details so appropriate, so clearly defined, that the imaginative power shown in their selection and handling may at first escape notice—*ars celavit artem*. Here also Arnold's affectionate study of flowers, which might, I suppose, have more or less been due to early association with Wordsworth, reveals itself.

He has little Grecian landscape except the graceful Sicilian scenes in *Empedocles*. Etna, like the Alps in the Swiss series of love-songs (chilly and self-conscious, if not selfish), is but slightly sketched in its mountain character—a fine paraphrase from Pindar supplying the picture of the eruption into which the philosopher plunges. It is the lower mountain slopes, the idyllic Sicily, here, and in the beautiful *Obermann*, on which the poet dwells with his most loving skill, his caressing touches.

Thus in the valleys of Etna—

The air

Is freshen'd by the leaping stream, which throws  
Eternal showers of spray on the moss'd roots  
Of trees, and veins of turf, and long dark shoots  
Of ivy plants, and fragrant hanging bells  
Of hyacinths, and on late anemonies.

This is true to Hellenic feeling. But, curiously, in the same drama he has placed in the mouth of Empedocles one of his most deeply felt, sad, characteristic pictures—

You, ye stars,  
Who slowly begin to marshal  
As of old, in the fields of Heaven,  
Your distant, melancholy lines ! . . .

You, too, once lived ! . . .

But now, you kindle  
Your lonely, cold-shining lights,  
Unwilling lingerers  
In the heavenly wilderness,  
For a younger, ignoble world ;  
And renew, by necessity,  
Night after night your courses ; . . .

---

Weary like us, though not  
Weary with our weariness.

Such thoughts of despair might indeed have passed through the mind of Empedocles or of Lucretius. Yet I think we must admit that Arnold here lapses into modernism, as it were bringing the stars within the range of human passion with a melancholy grandeur, which will be recognised by those who have wandered in the mystic gloom of his favourite *Obermann*.

Passing over regretfully the pictures of the Oxford region in the justly famous *Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*—pictures unforgettable clear and beautiful of the English Flora, whether of the garden or the wild—let me now add a Breton and an English landscape.

Merlin and Vivian are at the spot in the forest of Broceliande, where her enchantments are to seize him—

They came to where the brushwood ceased, and day  
Peer'd 'twixt the stems ; and the ground broke away  
In a sloped sward down to a brawling brook,  
And up as high as where they stood to look  
On the brook's further side was clear ; but then  
The underwood and trees began again.  
This open glen was studded thick with thorns  
Then white with blossom ; and you saw the horns,  
Through the green fern, of the shy fallow-deer  
Which come at noon down to the water here.  
You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along  
Under the thorns on the green sward ; and strong  
The blackbird whistled from the dingles near,  
And the weird chipping of the woodpecker  
Rang lonely and sharp ; the sky was fair,  
And a fresh breath of spring stirr'd everywhere.

Now the home landscape—

The evening comes, the field is still.  
The tinkle of the thirsty rill,  
Unheard all day, ascends again ;  
Deserted is the half-mown plain,

Silent the swaths ! the ringing wain,  
The mower's cry, the dog's alarms,  
All housed within the sleeping farms !  
The business of the day is done,  
The last-left haymaker is gone.  
And from the thyme upon the height,  
And from the elder-blossom white  
And pale dog-roses in the hedge,  
And from the mint-plant in the sedge,  
In puffs of balm the night-air blows  
The perfume which the day forgoes.  
And on the pure horizon far,  
See, pulsing with the first-born star,  
The liquid sky above the hill !  
The evening comes, the field is still.

These pictures, drawn with so clean a touch, like Arnold's descriptions generally, share the peculiar merits of Greek art when delineating Nature. Yet, if we think of the Vergilian landscape, of Dante's, of Shakespeare's, down to Wordsworth and Tennyson, something is felt absent—the form indeed admirable ; the colouring of the heart rarely here ; the music lacks the *vox humana*, the passionate note of the violin. This criticism, if correct, suggests that in fact this style, charming and satisfying in the little glimpses and vignettes of the Greek lyrists and the *Anthology*, is not fitted for longer, for set pictures, from nature. Yet, as in the case of Browning, should we not be deeply grateful to Matthew Arnold for his peculiar landscape gift ? for gardens austere and antique, not less than for those of tropical luxuriance. As Coleridge once said, we must not have an “Act of Uniformity against Poets.”

William Barnes (1801-1886). The landscape of this admirable poet in all its details is presented to us simply as it presented itself to his eye and heart—simply as a pleasure to the mind ; perfectly truthful, yet not itself dwelt on or moralised. It is with him the fit, the ever-present background to human life in the country, for Dorset to Barnes forms his England. Wholly modern, almost wholly devoted to his simple neigh-

bours ; purely Christian as was his work in song—yet its truest parallels may be found in many lyrics of Horace and the Greek *Anthology*. They are alike in admirably accurate and appropriate glimpses of Nature, in the variety of characters exhibited, in tenderness of feeling, in exquisite simplicity, in perfect poetical unity.

We will begin with one of Barnes's mainly landscape pieces, rare in his work—

Come out o' door, 'tis Spring ! 'tis May,  
 The trees be green, the vields be gay ;  
 The weather's warm, the winter blast,  
 Wi' all his train o' clouds, is past ;  
 The zun do rise while vo'k do sleep,  
 To teäke a higher daily zweep,  
 Wi' cloudless feäce a-flingèn down  
 His sparklèn light upon the groun'.  
 The air's a-streamèn soft,—come drow<sup>1</sup>  
 The windor open ; let it blow  
 In drough the house, where vire,<sup>1</sup> an' door  
 A-shut, kept out the cwold avore.  
 Come, let the vew dull embers die,  
 An' come below the open sky ;  
 An' wear your best, vor fear the groun'  
 In colours gay mid sheäme your gown :  
 An' goo an' rig<sup>2</sup> wi' me a mile  
 Or two up over geäte an' stile,  
 Drough zunny parrocks<sup>3</sup> that do leäd,  
 Wi' crooked hedges, to the meäd,  
 Where elem's high, in steäetly ranks,  
 Do rise vrom yellow cowslip-banks,  
 An' birds do twitter vrom the spray  
 O' bushes deck'd wi' snow-white may ;  
 An' gil'cups, wi' the deäisy bed,  
 Be under ev'ry step you tread.  
 We'll wind up roun' the hill, an' look,  
 All down the thickly-timber'd nook,

<sup>1</sup> *d* in Dorset is frequently used for *th* and *gt*, *v* for *f*.

<sup>2</sup> Climb.

<sup>3</sup> Small enclosures.

Out where the squier's house do show  
 His gray-wall'd peaks up drough the row  
 O' sheädy elems, where the rook  
 Do build her nest ; an' where the brook  
 Do creep along the meäds, an' lie  
 To catch the brightness o' the sky ;  
 An' cows, in water to their knees,  
 Do stan' a-whiskèn off the vlees.<sup>1</sup>

Mother o' blossoms, and ov all  
 That's feäir a-yield vrom Spring till Fall,  
 The gookoo over white-weäved seas  
 Do come to zing in thy green trees,  
 An' buttervlees, in giddy flight,  
 Do gleäm the mwost by thy gaÿ light.  
 Oh ! when, at last, my fleshly eyes  
 Shall shut upon the yields an' skies,  
 Mid<sup>2</sup> zummer's sunny days be gone,  
 An' winter's clouds be comèn on ;  
 Nor mid<sup>2</sup> I draw upon the e'th,<sup>3</sup>  
 O' thy sweet aïr my leätest breath ;  
 Alassen I mid want to staÿ  
 Behine' for thee, O flow'ry May !

The *Year Clock* is a similar poem, brilliantly personifying the seasons in a southern English county.

My second example, from *A Father out*, is a specimen of Barnes's usual method—the intimate and vital union of scenery with human life—

The snow-white clouds did float on high  
 In shoals avore the sheenèn sky,  
 An' runnèn weäves in pon' did cheäse  
 Each other on the water's feäce,  
 As hufflèn win' did blow between  
 The new-leaved boughs o' sheenèn green.  
 An' there, the while I walk'd along  
 The path, drough leäze,<sup>4</sup> above the drong,<sup>5</sup>  
 A little maid, wi' bloomèn feäce,

<sup>1</sup> Flies.

<sup>2</sup> *Might*, used for *if* or *should*.

<sup>3</sup> Earth.

<sup>4</sup> Unmown field.

<sup>5</sup> Narrow way.

Went on up hill wi' nimble peäce,  
A-leänèn to the right-han' zide,  
To car' a basket that did ride,  
A-hangèn down, wi' all his heft,<sup>1</sup>  
Upon her elbow at her left.  
An' yet she hardly seem'd to bruise  
The grass-bleädes wi' her tiny shoes,  
That pass'd each other, left an' right,  
In steps a'most too quick vor zight.  
But she'd a-left her mother's door  
A-bearèn vrom her little store  
Her father's welcome bit o' food,  
Where he wer out at work in wood ;  
An' she wer bless'd wi' mmore than zwome—  
A father out, an' mother hwome.

What admirable straightforward simpleness have we here ! in words how wholly unaffected and un-selfconscious ; with what perfect translucency is the vision of the little maid rendered ! Similar in style are the single poems given to delineation of the *Water Crowroot*, the *Lilac*, the *Blackbird*. Children especially—

—O so playsome, O so sweet,

as he sings—with the innocent joys of youth, give their brightest purest colours to these delightful (I might perhaps say) water-colour miniatures.

If unrestrained by our proper subject, much might be added upon this poet, whose affection for his own country-folk and their simple dialect must have so diminished his readers that, of all the greater English poets known to me (unless we add H. Vaughan), Barnes has received the scantiest share of honour due. Here it suffices to say that we have no one, Crabbe excepted, who has approached him in the multitude of his scenes and characters, taken almost wholly from the village life of his birth-county—pictures which, though not excluding its darker aspects, yet most often display healthy labour and healthy happiness ; whilst, turning to their qualities as art, these endless lyrics never fail in sweet simple words, set to

<sup>1</sup> Weight.

sweet simple music, in metres most skilfully handled or invented ; never fail, lastly, in a unity and felicity of treatment which has been justly compared to the exquisite skill of Horace. Various tests have been proposed of genuine feeling for poetry. As one, I would venture to add—a true appreciation of William Barnes.

Charles Tennyson Turner (1808-1879) : A remarkable sympathy unites Alfred Tennyson's next elder brother with Barnes. Like him, Charles Tennyson was not only a fine scholar, but a true and warm lover of classical poetry. And although he diverged into a wider range of subject, yet much of his work, and that the most characteristic, is parallel to that of Barnes. As he painted Dorset, so Tennyson rendered Lincolnshire village ways and scenery. An unsurpassed tenderness for childhood is common to both poets ; they shared, because (in the beautiful phrase of Coleridge) they loved, the

Life reveal'd to innocence alone.

Leigh Hunt, when Charles Tennyson's first little venture appeared in 1830, welcomed it, and Alfred's earliest collection, also published in 1830, as above anything he had seen "since the last volume of Keats," and as books entitling their authors to "take their stand at once among the first poets of "the day." Coleridge also read the collection in his old age, annotating the pages, as was his wont. Though more judicial than Hunt's, his estimate is also very high. And, fifty years later,<sup>1</sup> James Spedding, the friend of both brothers, fairly summed up the genius and aims of Charles : "Nothing in "nature, animate or inanimate, could be so common, or to "ordinary eyes so insignificant, but his fine observation, tender "thought, and pathetic humour would find matter in it for "the imagination, the fancy, the heart, or the conscience. . . . [But] "it is in the kindly human interest which he infuses "into everything that he looks upon or thinks of, that his "special and peculiar originality is most conspicuous." This

<sup>1</sup> In the Introductory Essay before the *Collected Sonnets, Old and New*, of C. T. Turner, 1880.

poet's sympathy was so gracious, so all-pervading, that it has dyed with its own colours not only the landscape with all its smaller features,—birds and flowers, but also the very tools of the labourer, the steam-thresher, the distant railway—the poet's imagination not only personifying, but ensouling them with human life, under pressure of a strange personal energy. Henry Vaughan, two centuries before, has shown the same power, which is quite distinct from the gift of vivid description.

If I here offer a liberal selection from Charles Tennyson's work, this is because it is so little known. The first, one of the early sonnets, shows how from the beginning he revelled in the fineness of detail—

#### *A SUMMER TWILIGHT*

It is a Summer gloaming, balmy-sweet,  
A gloaming brighten'd by an infant moon,  
Fraught with the fairest light of middle June ;  
The lonely garden echoes to my feet,  
And hark ! O hear I not the gentle dews,  
Fretting the silent forest in his sleep ?  
Or does the stir of housing insects creep  
Thus faintly on mine ears ? Day's many hues  
Waned with the paling light and are no more,  
And none but drowsy pinions beat the air :  
The bat is hunting softly by my door,  
And, noiseless as the snow-flake, leaves his lair ;  
O'er the still copses flitting here and there,  
Wheeling the self-same circuit o'er and o'er.

#### *THE FIRST WEEK IN OCTOBER*

Once on an autumn day as I repos'd  
Beneath a noon-beam, pallid yet not dull,  
The branch above my head dipt itself full  
Of that white sunshine momently, and closed ;  
While, ever and anon, the ashen keys  
Dropt down beside the tarnish'd hollyhocks,  
The scarlet crane's-bill, and the faded stocks,—  
Flung from the shuffling leafage by the breeze.

How wistfully I mark'd the year's decay,  
Forecasting all the dreary wind and rain ;  
'Twas the last week the swallow would remain—  
How jealously I watch'd his circling play !  
A few brief hours, and he would dart away,  
No more to turn upon himself again.

#### *THE THAW-WIND*

Thro' the deep drifts the south wind breathed its way  
Down to the earth's green face ; the air grew warm,  
The snow-drops had regain'd their lonely charm,  
The world had melted round them in a day :  
My full heart long'd for violets—the blue arch  
Of heaven—the blackbird's song—but Nature kept  
Her stately order—Vegetation slept—  
Nor could I force the unborn sweets of March  
Upon a winter's thaw. With eyes that brook'd  
A narrower prospect than my fancy craved,  
Upon the golden aconites I look'd,  
And on the leafless willows as they waved—  
And on the broad leaved, half-thaw'd ivy-tod,  
That glitter'd, dripping down upon the sod.

#### *MORNING*

It is the fairest sight in Nature's realms,  
To see on summer morning, dewy-sweet,  
That very type of freshness, the green wheat,  
Surging thro' shadows of the hedgerow elms ;  
How the eye revels in the many shapes  
And colours which the risen day restores !  
How the wind blows the poppy's scarlet capes  
About his urn ! and how the lark upsoars !  
Not like the timid corn-craik scudding fast  
From his own voice, he with him takes his song  
Heavenward, then, striking sideways, shoots along,  
Happy as sailor boy that, from the mast,  
Runs out upon the yard-arm, till at last  
He sinks into his nest, those clover tufts among.

*THE STEAM THRESHING-MACHINE**WITH THE STRAW-CARRIER*

Flush with the pond the lurid furnace burn'd  
At eve, while smoke and vapour fill'd the yard ;  
The gloomy winter sky was dimly starr'd,  
The fly-wheel with a mellow murmur turn'd ;  
While, ever rising on its mystic stair  
In the dim light, from secret chambers borne,  
The straw of harvest, sever'd from the corn,  
Climb'd, and fell over, in the murky air.  
I thought of mind and matter, will and law,  
And then of him, who set his stately seal  
Of Roman words on all the forms he saw  
Of old-world husbandry ; *I could but feel*  
With what a rich precision *he* would draw  
The endless ladder, and the booming wheel !

Vergil, the poet presently notes, saw much the same human interest in farming tools—

The wizard Mantuan  
Who catalogued in rich hexameters  
The Rake, the Roller, and the mystic Van.

A delicately quaint humour, also among C. Tennyson's gifts, pervades the following sonnet :—

*TO A SCARECROW*

Poor malkin, why hast thou been left behind ?  
The wains long since have carted off the sheaves,  
And keen October, with his whistling wind,  
Snaps all the footstalks of the crisping leaves ;  
Methinks thou art not wholly make-believe ;  
Thy posture, hat, and coat, are human still ;  
Could'st thou but push a hand from out thy sleeve !  
Or smile on me ! but ah ! thy face is nil !  
The stubbles darken round thee, lonely one !  
And man has left thee, all this dreary term,

No mate beside thee,—far from social joy ;  
As some poor clerk survives his ruin'd firm,  
And, in a napless hat, without employ,  
Stands, in the autumn of his life, alone.

Similarly he gives life to the Hydraulic Ram, the Buoy-Bell, or to the children's old Rocking-horse.

Nature and Humanity are beautifully and most touchingly entwined in our last example—

#### MARY—A REMINISCENCE

She died in June, while yet the woodbine sprays  
Waved o'er the outlet of this garden-dell ;  
Before the advent of these Autumn days  
And dark unblossom'd verdure. As befel,  
I from my window gazed, yearning to forge  
Some comfort out of anguish so forlorn ;  
The dull rain stream'd before the bloomless gorge,  
By which, erewhile, on each less genial morn,  
Our Mary pass'd, to gain her shelter'd lawn,  
With Death's disastrous rose upon her cheek.  
How often had I watch'd her, pale and meek,  
Pacing the sward ! and now I daily seek  
The track, by those slow pausing footsteps worn,  
How faintly worn ! though trodden week by week.

That *disastrous rose* of consumption,—what a fine, what an original touch !

These sonnets intentionally differ in structure from the orthodox arrangement ; the poet seems to have followed, whilst enlarging, the precedent set by Spenser. And although when single sonnets, especially if grand in style, are concerned, the pure Italian fashion is certainly the most effective, the most musical and shapely ; yet, when placed in a sequence such as this, the monotony which besets that form may be avoided, whilst the system of the rhymes is rendered a little easier.

We have poets of wider sweep and greater power than Charles Tennyson, none more decisively original ; in *style* he

is absolutely unlike his illustrious brother. His own phrase, "the single-hearted sonnet," is truly justified by his work; some of the sonnets, indeed, Alfred held "among the noblest" "in our language." It is sad and strange that so sweet a singer, one who should be dear also for his brother's sake, should be neglected—and that, now when the great Voices are silent—not less than Barnes; although Tennyson does not offer the superficial difficulty of a rustic dialect. But *Books also have their fates.* Why, however, will readers turn to the literature "which can be enjoyed but once"—

Those gilded trifles of the hour,  
Those painted nothings sure to cloy<sup>1</sup>—

from that which offers permanent truth to human nature, pathos, and beauty together?

<sup>1</sup> S. T. Coleridge.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *THE LANDSCAPE OF ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON*

RESERVING some short notice of Alfred Tennyson's general position as poet for the close, let us begin at once with the landscape of his youthful work, and attempt the curious and interesting task of tracing its gradual development through sixty years and more.

We have the first instance in *Claribel*, that lovely song in which the natural details of a wild wood are subordinated to the *Melody* which the poet truly names it—

Where Claribel low-lieth  
The breezes pause and die,  
Letting the rose-leaves fall :  
But the solemn oak-tree sigheth,  
Thick-leaved, ambrosial,  
With an ancient melody  
Of an inward agony,  
Where Claribel low-lieth.

If a little mannered, yet through its fullness of diction and resolution of every image into music, the poet's mature art is partially foreshadowed, as in the curious experiment named *Leonine Elegiacs* which follows, his varied metrical power and invention are youthfully prefigured—

Winds creep ; dews fall chilly : in her first sleep earth breathes  
stilly :  
Over the pools in the burn water-gnats murmur and mourn.  
Sadly the far kine loweth : the glimmering water outfloweth :  
Twin peaks shadow'd with pine slope to the dark hyaline.

Such poems as these come from what in his own phrase was

—In my morn of youth  
The unsunn'd freshness of my strength ;

but greater power and art presently appear in the *Mariana* of the Grange. The details here are as numerous and as clearly delineated as in some early Italian or Flemish panel, yet all coloured by the human passion of the subject—

With blackest moss the flower-plots  
Were thickly crusted, one and all :  
The rusted nails fell from the knots  
That held the pear to the gable-wall.

About a stone-cast from the wall  
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,  
And o'er it many, round and small,  
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.  
Hard by a poplar shook alway,  
All silver-green with gnarled bark :  
For leagues no other tree did mark  
The level waste, the rounding gray.

All day within the dreamy house,  
The doors upon their hinges creak'd ;  
The blue fly sung in the pane ; the mouse  
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,  
Or from the crevice peer'd about.

We may smile now at the pompous jocosity with which a review of the period set forth these lines for the reader's scorn. Yet it should be remembered that the style was then a wholly new thing in English art, and that he who thus comes forward must force his way if he wishes others to find it.

Indeed, Tennyson's skill was not yet certain ; the Oriental picture which follows is so overwhelmed and overdone with luscious sweetness, splendour on splendour, that not one half,

but one-tenth, one might say, would be more than the whole.<sup>1</sup> Nor was he quite master of his lovely instrument in the most complete topographical landscape which he left—the picture of his own home presented in the *Ode to Memory*, which, as a whole, is somewhat too dithyrambic. Thus the poet invokes her—

Thou wert not nurséd by the waterfall  
 Which ever sounds and shines  
 A pillar of white light upon the wall  
 Of purple cliffs, aloof descried :  
 Come from the woods that belt the gray hill-side,  
 The seven elms, the poplars four  
 That stand beside my father's door,  
 And chiefly from the brook that loves  
 To purl o'er matted cress and ribbéd sand,  
 Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,  
 Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,  
 In every elbow and turn,  
 The filter'd tribute of the rough woodland,  
 O ! hither lead thy feet ! .  
 Pour round mine ears the livelong bleat  
 Of the thick-fleecéd sheep from wattled folds,  
 Upon the ridgéd wolds,  
 When the first matin-song hath waken'd loud  
 Over the dark dewy earth forlorn,  
 What time the amber morn  
 Forth gushes from beneath a low-hung cloud.

Or, again, treating his descriptive power as really the work of “that great artist, Memory”—

Ever retiring thou dost gaze  
 On the prime labour of thine early days :  
 No matter what the sketch might be ;

<sup>1</sup> M. Taine, a painstaking critic, somewhere about 1864, when engaged upon his review of English literature, remarked to me that Tennyson lived in great luxury during his youth. So far from this, I assured him that for several years he had gone through real poverty, and asked on what grounds M. Taine had formed his opinion. He answered : Upon his early poems, especially the *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*.—Such is subjective criticism !

Whether the high field on the bushless Pike,  
 Or even a sand-built ridge  
 Of heap'd hills that mound the sea,  
 Overblown with murmurs harsh,  
 Or even a lowly cottage whence we see  
 Stretch'd wide and wild the waste enormous marsh,  
 Where from the frequent bridge,  
 Like emblems of infinity,  
 The trenchéd waters run from sky to sky.

*The trenchéd waters run from sky to sky.* Here we have already Tennyson's power of fixing a scene, characteristic of the Lincolnshire marshland, in a few perfect words—in the absolutely right and *only* words,—a power in which he is, I think, unsurpassed, rarely rivalled. And then presently in the Song *A Spirit haunts*, . . . and in that of the *Dying Swan*, the poet more definitely appears to fulfil himself. But these must be left to the reader's remembrance.

Coleridge has told us, and no better authority could be found, that "there is no profession on earth which requires an "attention so early, so long, or so unintermitting, as that of "poetry."<sup>1</sup> In this spirit, from 1833 to 1840, Tennyson was slowly but unfalteringly perfecting his art and forming himself. His character and his verse, like the star, "without resting, yet "without haste," advanced together. Henceforth we often find that gift of flashing the landscape before us in a word or two which I have just noticed—those felicities of language which, again, "seem to be almost things instead of words."<sup>2</sup>

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,  
 Little breezes *dusk and shiver*  
 Thro' the wave that runs for ever.

This I take from one of Tennyson's earliest Arthurian sketches, *The Lady of Shalott*.

Then who has put a perfect picture into more perfect word than that

An English home—gray twilight pour'd  
 On dewy pastures, dewy trees,

<sup>1</sup> *Biographia Literaria*, ch. ii.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Card. Newman.

Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,  
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Or, again, speaking of the sea as watched from a lofty precipice, how he pounces as it were upon the one right word—

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls.

And here for a moment let us compare a far later and wider vignette describing, also from a height, that of his own house, Aldworth—

The view  
Long-known and loved by me,  
Green Sussex fading into blue  
With one gray glimpse of sea.

In this vividly picturesque style we may name the winter snow scene in the *Saint Agnes Eve*, or the glimpses of Nature in the *Gardener's Daughter*, although here the early elaborateness, the something too musk-rosy, perhaps, has not wholly disappeared. If we now take one or two longer examples ; how in the second *Mariana* has Tennyson set before us the landscape of South and North with a seeming effortless lucidity !—

Nor bird would sing, nor lamb would bleat,  
Nor any cloud would cross the vault,  
But day increased from heat to heat,  
On stony drought and steaming salt ;  
Till now at noon she slept again,  
And seem'd knee-deep in mountain grass,  
And heard her native breezes pass,  
And runlets babbling down the glen.<sup>1</sup>

A wider sweep, a more brilliantly coloured effect belongs to the oriental landscape framed in *Locksley Hall*—

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,  
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,  
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from  
the crag ;

<sup>1</sup> Compare Dante's *little streams that flow down . . .* quoted in chap. vii.

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree—

Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea.

Here, again, for a moment's contrast let me place a scene from the later *Locksley*: the thought larger, the music less attuned to sweetness, but deeper—the bass voice, we might say, taking the song in place of the tenor—

What are men that He should heed us? cried the king of sacred song;

Insects of an hour, that hourly work their brother insect wrong,

While the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along their fiery way,  
All their planets whirling round them, flash a million miles a day.

Many an *Æon* moulded earth before her highest, man, was born,  
Many an *Æon* too may pass when earth is manless and forlorn,

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt, and plots of land—

X Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of mountain, grains of sand!

It is a landscape more distinctly built up by imagination which we find in the *Lotos-Eaters*. Brilliant as the inventions of Tennyson in this manner are, we may allow ourselves to turn readily to what are more clearly transcripts from actual Nature, yet Nature (as art always requires) everywhere modified and impassioned by the poet's soul. Such—lingering still among the poems of young manhood—we find in two pictures, both indebted, I believe, to Pyrenean scenery: the vale in Ida of *Œnone*, and the “small sweet Idyl” of the *Princess*—

Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:  
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)  
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?

For Love is of the valley, come thou down  
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,  
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize;

But not on the mountain *Horns*:

Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,  
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,  
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls  
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors :  
But follow ; let the torrent dance thee down  
To find him in the valley ; let the wild  
Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave  
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill  
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,  
That like a broken purpose waste in air :  
So waste not thou ; but come.<sup>1</sup>

With diffidence I have ventured to give instances of advance in style ; for, to turn now to a brief examination of Tennyson's Landscape treatment, I find little *essential* change in it from youth to age, though the scheme grows larger and bolder, the music more exquisite, the eye undimmed, the sweep of the brush unfaltering in its delicately tremulous firmness. It is the moral atmosphere, the darker deeper thoughts of mature life, which most markedly influence the selection of his later landscapes : the technical method of each, as I have said, seems but little altered. Tennyson's general rendering of Nature might be therefore defined, so far as such high mysteries of the poets' studio admit of definition, as nearer the manner of Keats than any other, at least of our more recent poets. ✓ Landscape with him is mainly regarded as the source of the pure pleasure of the eye, given to man by the Creator as an aid to healthy happiness—to put the soul, as it were, in a position to ascend to higher thoughts ;—in proportion to the simple sensitiveness we bring, able almost unconsciously to delight, to tranquillise, to comfort. In our poet's treatment, the picture drawn, or the allusion indicated, is always appropriate to the human interest of the poem, to what one might call, the landscape of the heart. Further, it is also painted as directly sympathetic ✓

<sup>1</sup> Here we have a beautiful echo from the beautiful invocations of Theocritus and Vergil (quoted already, pp. 27, 47)—

ἀλλ' ἀφίκεν τὸ ποθ' ἀμέ . . .  
huc ades, o Galatea . . .

with the subject of his song, not simply as its fit frame or background, whenever the passion of the moment requires it. But from the animism of Shelley, the moralising of Wordsworth, however deeply felt and admired, Tennyson almost wholly abstains.)

This may be called the natural mode in which Nature affects man. It is the Greek spirit, and no less that of Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and (as I have said), Keats. The healthiest mode, also, I would venture to call it, although the human mind has of course room for those more subjective, those more entralling aspects of Nature which other poets have preferred to render.

Hence, and because no poet is more thoroughly his own interpreter, some brief specimens, chosen to exemplify the correspondence of Tennyson's landscape with the gradual development of mind and subject I have alluded to, may be sufficient. Yet, if I offered thrice as many, they would be but drops from an infinite ocean of song and scenery.

*In Memoriam* naturally is rich in landscape, not only as a lovely background, but as corresponding intimately to the moods of the sorrowing soul.

My first example marks the time between Arthur Hallam's death and burial at Clevedon—

Calm is the morn without a sound,  
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,  
And only thro' the faded leaf  
The chestnut pattering to the ground :

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,  
And on these dews that drench the furze,  
And all the silvery gossamers  
That twinkle into green and gold :

Calm and still light on yon great plain  
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,  
And crowded farms and lessening towers,  
To mingle with the bounding main :

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,  
These leaves that redden to the fall ;

And in my heart, if calm at all,  
 If any calm, a calm despair :  
 Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,  
 And waves that sway themselves in rest,  
 And dead calm in that noble breast  
 Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

In contrast soon follows a storm scene—

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,  
 And howlest, issuing out of night,  
 With blasts that blow the poplar white,  
 And lash with storm the streaming pane ?  
 . . . .  
 Who usherest in the dolorous hour  
 With thy quick tears that make the rose  
 Pull sideways, and the daisy close  
 Her crimson fringes to the shower.

As with time followed a certain resignation to the sense of his great loss, the poem here and there reflects this more peaceful mood. One evening scene begins thus—

By night we linger'd on the lawn,  
 For underfoot the herb was dry ;  
 And genial warmth ; and o'er the sky  
 The silvery haze of summer drawn.

Another picture I must give in full—

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,  
 And rarely pipes the mounted thrush ;  
 Or underneath the barren bush  
 Flits by the sea-blue bird<sup>1</sup> of March ;  
 Come, wear the form by which I know  
 Thy spirit in time among thy peers ;  
 The hope of unaccomplish'd years  
 Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change  
 May breathe, with many roses sweet,

<sup>1</sup> Kingfisher.

---

Upon the thousand waves of wheat,  
That ripple round the lonely grange ;  
Come : not in watches of the night,  
But where the sunbeam broodeth warm,  
Come, beauteous in thine after form,  
And like a finer light in light.

Here, perhaps, we have the most exquisite union of feeling and scenery which even the *In Memoriam* offers.

A very interesting group of three sonnets, as they would have been called in Elizabethan days, is contained in Nos. xcix-ci, which give remembrances of Tennyson's Lincolnshire home. And we have occasional proof of his interest, strong and penetrative, in physical science—

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.  
O earth, what changes hast thou seen !  
There where the long street roars, hath been  
The stillness of the central sea.

Or, again—

The moanings of the homeless sea,  
The sound of streams that swift or slow  
Draw down Aeonian hills, and sow  
The dust of continents to be.

Tennyson, ever watchful of natural detail, was pleased if he felt that he had put successfully into verse some little noticed phenomenon. Yet the pleasure (which C. Darwin also must have often known) of going closely true to real fact, the sense almost of absolute contact with Nature, was the predominant feeling. I quote one stanza upon the flowering of the yew-tree, as he more than once asked if I knew to what he referred—

Old warder of these buried bones,  
And answering now my random stroke  
With fruitful cloud and living smoke,  
Dark yew, that graspest at the stones—

the scene being in some country churchyard.

*Maud* seems to mark the central point in Tennyson's development : the period when a complete equilibrium between his plastic powers and his imagination—not so uniformly maintained in his earliest and latest years—had established itself. This was also the most passionate moment of his poetry ; no landscape in our literature—perhaps in any literature—is so transfused and empurpled with love overmastering, whilst tinged with approaching madness. We are almost ready to say with Portia—

O love, be moderate ; allay thy ecstasy !

Yet through all the whirlwind of passion how closely does Tennyson cling to natural truth—witness the stanza on Maud herself—

I know the way she went  
Home with her maiden posy,  
For her feet have touch'd the meadows  
And left the daisies rosy.

Many a poet, as I have noticed already in Petrarch, has thought his verse more poetical when painting the flowers of the field as unbent by a girl's footstep. How far more convincing is the hint here given of the true structure of the daisy, the crimson florets which encircle the underside of the blossom ! But Tennyson had all the notes of love within his compass, and not less sweet a passion is in one simple quatrain among the songs which he wrote for music—

Oh, the woods and the meadows,  
Woods where we hid from the wet,  
Stiles where we stay'd to be kind,  
Meadows in which we met !

The landscape of the great Arthurian idylls is presented in occasional scattered touches, slight yet firmly laid-in, and closely illustrative of the story, whether sun-bright foreground or hazy distance be before us. We probably put this landscape together by fancy, each for himself, as the mind inevitably is wont to create a vague scenery for play or story if we read

Shakespeare or Scott—scenery all the more real perhaps to us because it has been left by the poet so deftly to our imagination. In this subjective mood a landscape suggested by the idylls, or in accordance with them, has been ingeniously sketched by Mr. Stopford Brooke—

“He has built around his people the image of a whole country, with its woods and streams, hills and moors, marsh and desert, dark oceans rolling in on iron coasts, vast wastes, ancient records of a bygone world ; hamlets and towns . . . storms and sunshine . . . Nature in her moods of beauty and brightness, of gloom and horror. And over them he has shed a light from the ancient time, a romantic air and sky.”<sup>1</sup>

Looking now to the Epic itself (and putting aside here that early picture of Sir Bedivere at the Lake), perhaps no landscapes more defined are given us than the respective voyages of Galahad and Lancelot in the *Grail*; or than the scene in the *Last Tournament*, when Tristram, we are told, is dreaming of a combat between a demon knight and Arthur; who simply lets his foe

Fall, as the crest of some slow-arching wave,  
Heard in dead night along that table-shore,  
Drops flat, and after the great waters break  
Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,  
Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud,  
From less and less to nothing ;

till his knights burst in and fire the demon castle, which, blazing high—

Made all above it, and a hundred meres  
About it, as the water Moab saw  
Come round by the East, and out beyond them flush'd  
The long low dune, and lazy-plunging sea.

To this middle period belong a few English idylls which rank with Tennyson's most finished work. Among these are *Enoch Arden* (which may be reckoned his greatest success in

<sup>1</sup> *Tennyson*, 1894.

a form of poetry that he has made peculiarly his own), and the terribly powerful *Aylmer's Field*. Each has a landscape of singular brilliancy ; in *Enoch* the scenery of a tropical island, where the intensity of the colouring seems to be deepened by the presence of the lonely sailor ; whilst *Aylmer's Field* gives a group of sweet flower-overgrown cottages, such as one sees and can only see in England. Or, again, where shall we find a stream like a living creature before us, in verse so true to Nature's finest details—simple as if the words had of themselves ranged themselves into perfect music—as the *Brook* in the idyll named from it ?—

With many a curve my banks I fret  
By many a field and fallow,  
And many a fairy foreland set  
With willow-weed and mallow.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,  
Among my skimming swallows ;  
I make the netted sunbeam dance  
Against my sandy shallows.

And this summer of the poet gave us also two pieces notably rich in landscape. The record of his first Italian journey is one series of vignettes, whose delicate truth they who have traversed the route (Riviera, Florence, Milan, Como) will always recognise—vignettes worthy of Turner at his best.) The view from Milan Cathedral spire indeed wonderfully recalls the actual magic of the great artist's style when dealing with remote distances—

D 22-7

I climb'd the roofs at break of day ;  
Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.

( : 1 - 1 )

I stood among the silent statues  
And statued pinnacles, mute as they.

g. t. 11

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,  
Was Monte Rosa, hanging there

A thousand shadowy-pencil'd valleys  
And snowy dells in a golden air.

We have seen Tennyson's picture of the Lincolnshire garden of his youth. Now in the lines to F. D. Maurice he gave another of the

—Careless-order'd garden  
Close to the ridge of a noble down—

Farringford by Freshwater, so long his home,—returning to the cherished spot with more fullness in the later stanzas *To Ulysses*.

In sharp contrast with these scenes of almost ideal beauty, the *Northern Farmer* offers the first of those humorous county scenes which enter into the poems in dialect, and like the landscape of the Arthurian *Idylls*, are told in brief powerful touches. For nothing is more remarkable than Tennyson's inexhaustible variety and range of subject. In this it would be hard to find his rival. His lyre seems to have ten strings.

It would, indeed, be easy to form a whole anthology of landscape from this single poet's work. Much has been quoted, yet some fragments must be added from the latest poems. Thus far I have often compared Tennyson's style, so brilliant, so complete in art, to that of *Titian*. Such a comparison is of course general, and must not be pressed far. And similarly Rembrandt may justly be recalled when we think of *Rizpah*, of *Columbus*, *The Wreck*, the *Leper's Bride*, *Despair*, the second *Locksley Hall*. Yet among poems of this deeply shadowed, darkly toned class, others, and, perhaps, especially those rendering landscape, exhibit the poet's full lordship over beauty, that unwearied brightness of soul, that "boy for ever," which, despite the depths of sad seriousness which haunted him from youth, he retained even to the moon-lit death-bed at Aldworth.

I take now those which I have likened to some of Rembrandt's work. The first is from Tennyson's last classical idyll but one, *Demeter and Persephone*—

A sudden nightingale  
Saw thee, and flash'd into a frolic of song  
And welcome ; and a gleam as of the moon,

When first she peers alo  
Fled wavering o'er thy face  
That shadow of a likeness  
Of shadows, thy dark man

Now the strain changes to the minor

Rain-rotten died the wheat  
Were hollow-husk'd, the leaves  
Pale at my grief, drew down  
Sickening, and *Aetna* kept

From *Rizpah* I give the opening  
lament over the son cruelly hung  
country hill-top ; it prepares us for  
masterpiece—

Wailing, wailing, wailing, the wind  
And Willy's voice in the wind, "C  
Why should he call me to-night,  
go ?

For the downs are as bright as day  
the snow.

Two brief scenes of storm :  
examples in this style, which  
Aeschylus as well as with Rembrandt  
a mother over the child she  
coloured by the even darker green  
painted despairing atheism—

My sin to my desolate little one  
When her orphan wail came to the  
wind,  
And a voice rang out in the  
“Thou hast sinn'd.”  
And down in the cabin were  
tides  
Plunged on the vessel and swallows  
And ever the great storm gave  
blast  
In the rigging, voices of hell

---

Or, again, as the soul-ruined man and wife go forth to die—

—Ah God, that night, that night  
When the rolling eyes of the lighthouse there on the fatal neck  
Of land running out into rock—they had saved many hundreds  
from wreck—  
Glared on our way toward death, I remember I thought, as we  
past,  
Does it matter how many they saved? we are all of us wreck'd  
at last—  
“Do you fear?” and there came thro' the roar of the breaker a  
whisper, a breath,  
“Fear? am I not with you? I am frightened at life, not death.”

What a terrible stroke of reality in the *stares at the snow*,  
—in the *rolling eyes of the lighthouse!* And what ineffable  
sadness in the following lamentation of a youth who has no  
creed but a disillusioned Epicureanism!—

O rosetree planted in my grief,  
And growing, on her tomb,  
Her dust is greening in your leaf,  
Her blood is in your bloom.  
O slender lily waving there,  
And laughing back the light,  
In vain you tell me “Earth is fair”  
When all is dark as night.

As an example of *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* has already  
been given, we may turn with pleasure to the lines in which  
Tennyson reverts to the charm and the beauty, the sunny  
sweetness, more congenial to himself. For, to touch again on  
his inner nature, those solemn words, “as sorrowful, yet alway  
“rejoicing,” might be truly applied to the innermost being of  
this poet, whether in his life or his poetry.

To this date belongs what is perhaps the least known of  
those exquisite pictures of Southern scenery which began in  
the original *Locksley Hall*; placed in the mouth of that un-  
happy mother in *The Wreck*, from which we have already  
quoted, describing how she was tempted to quit her duty—

—He spoke of his tropical home in the canes by the purple tide,  
And the high star-crowns of his palms on the deep-wooded  
mountain-side,  
And cliffs all robed in lianas that dropt to the brink of his bay,  
And trees like the towers of a minster, the sons of a winterless  
day.

( But it will be best to quote the song written on a visit to Lombardy, which is another example of the sweet, long-flowing metres of the poet's later days. It is founded on two exquisite little poems by Catullus, one celebrating his home upon the peninsula of Sirmio on Lake Garda (to which we have before alluded), the other, the death of his dearly loved brother—

Row us out from Desenzano, to your Sirmione row ! )  
So they row'd, and there we landed—" O venusta Sirmio ! "  
There to me thro' all the groves of olive in the summer glow,  
There beneath the Roman ruin where the purple flowers grow,  
Came that "Ave atque Vale" of the poet's hopeless woe,  
Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen hundred years ago,  
" Frater Ave atque Vale"—as we wander'd to and fro  
Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the Garda Lake below  
Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio ! )

But perhaps the completest and most noteworthy landscape of these days is the delightful picture of *Early Spring*—

Once more the Heavenly Power  
Makes all things new,  
And domes the red-plow'd hills  
With loving blue ;  
The blackbirds have their wills,  
The throstles too.

Opens a door in Heaven ;  
From skies of glass  
A Jacob's ladder falls  
On greening grass,  
And o'er the mountain-walls  
Young angels pass.

The woods with living airs  
How softly fann'd,  
Light airs from where the deep,  
All down the sand,  
Is breathing in his sleep,  
Heard by the land.

Past, Future, glimpse and fade  
Thro' some slight spell,  
A gleam from yonder vale,  
Some far blue fell,  
And sympathies, how frail,  
In sound and smell !

Till at thy chuckled note,  
Thou twinkling bird,  
The fairy fancies range,  
And, lightly stirr'd,  
Ring little bells of change  
From word to word.

For now the Heavenly Power  
Makes all things new,  
And thaws the cold, and fills  
The flower with dew ;  
The blackbirds have their wills,  
The poets too.

Nature here is looked on as a living sentient thing, somewhat in Wordsworth's style, yet with a feeling all Tennyson's own ; whilst at the same time, as Mr. Mackail has noted, in the last stanza but one he has "come very near, as near perhaps as it "is possible to do in words, towards explaining the actual "process through which poetry comes into existence."<sup>1</sup>

Here, perhaps, this book should close. But I cannot thus quit one, for forty-three years and more a friend ever kind and true ; and one whose company, with that of his honoured wife, was an invaluable lesson for the conduct of life, for gracious-

<sup>1</sup> *Latin Literature.*

ness, for unselfishness. It would be a rash folly were I to attempt prejudging the verdict of Time, or dare try to assign to Tennyson his final place in the great army of the poets. Yet I will hope for excuse if, as a mere individual opinion, I express the belief that great now as may be his fame —should our civilisation be maintained—a prospect sadly dubious,—that fame a century hence ought to be found far greater. My ground for this expectation lies in his vast world of subject, in his high moral range, in his perfect art. Few, if any, are the poets who have more consistently kept in view and truly poised those two great essentials—pleasure as the true final aim of poetry ; wealth and nobleness of thought to confer on pleasure those few hundred years of life which man pleases himself with naming immortality—*σκιᾶς ὄντα, dream of a shadow.* Meanwhile, let me quote a few fine words, as a little epitaph, from one of Petrarch's Latin poems—

Vivit amor, vivit dolor ! ora negatur  
dulcia conspicere ; at flere et meminisse relictum est.

Alfred Tennyson always rated his own work so modestly, his heart was so fixed with sure but humble faith on the sight of his Pilot "face to face," on that Life which, in his own words, was to him "Life indeed," that earthly fame had in his eyes scarce any value. Yet we, looking at that work, may surely say, To have aims nobly unselfish, great gifts, and then his honoured fourscore years and more—the soul's range always expanding and mounting, as he sang, to delight, to teach, and to elevate mankind, wherever the world's destined master-language is heard—was not this to crown his days on earth with Euthanasia ?



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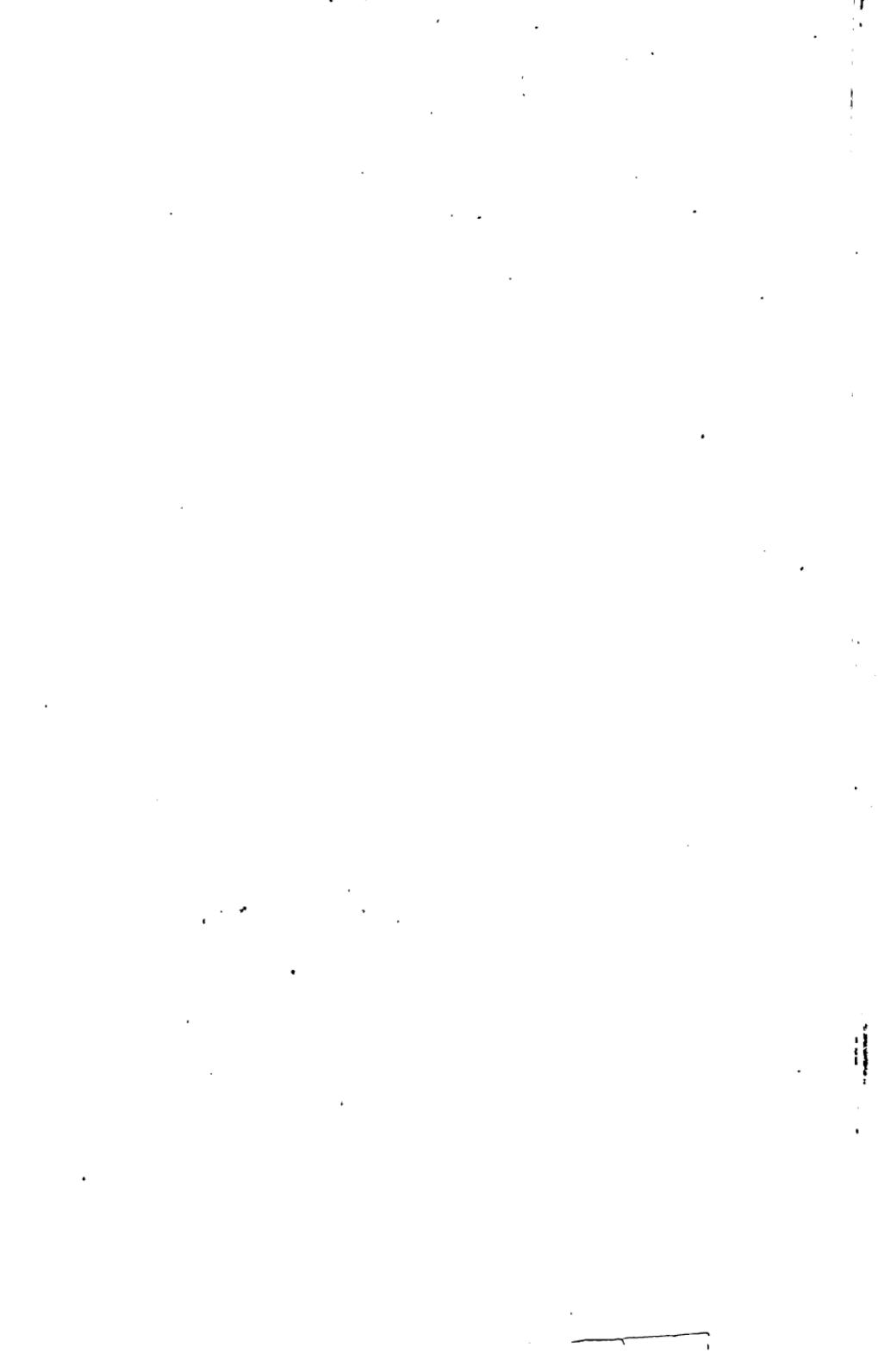
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